
By EDGAR LEE MASTERS

Author of "Mitch Miller," "Spoon River Anthology,"

"Children of the Market Place," etc.

SKEETERS KIRBY

THE many readers of "Mitch Miller" will need no introduction to "Skeeters Kirby," that delightful companion of Mitch's boyhood.

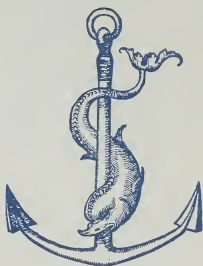
Here in his new book Mr. Masters follows Skeet's career from the Mitch period through his young manhood. He is not writing of boys and boy problems but of those later days when the world is opening up to youth, eager to drink to the full of the cup of experience, and keen for new and fresh encounters. Skeet is anxious to make the most of life, of business—and of love. He is eager to find beauty . . . and he looks for it sometimes in strange ways and stranger places. It is a remarkable character that Mr. Masters gives us, and the story of his life and love is not only interesting, but will be found to contain much significant comment on our present social structure.



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BY
Edgar Lee Masters

DOMESDAY BOOK
STARVED ROCK
TOWARD THE GULF
THE GREAT VALLEY
SONGS AND SATIRES
SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY
THE OPEN SEA
MITCH MILLER
CHILDREN OF THE MARKET PLACE

SKEETERS KIRBY

A Novel

BY

EDGAR LEE MASTERS

New York

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1923

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BEGINNIN'

"MITCH MILLER" was wrote on the idea of comin' out of sleep, and seein' things gradually as you became woke up; and it was about learnin' that your pa and ma and sister was around; and afterward learnin' about the town, and that its name was Petersburg; and afterward learnin' about the Miller family; and then findin' Mitch, and so on, as I wrote in "MITCH MILLER." And that book was not so much about me as this book will be; but it was wrote on "supposin'" as you will see by readin' the beginnin'. But this book is different; this book is a telescope; I mean it stretches out, and the *further* you draw it out, the better you see. And this book is also about modelin', or makin' a figure out of clay, which is me. Now this is what I mean:

Uncle Lemuel, which I wrote about in "MITCH MILLER," gave my Uncle Henry a telescope; and it used to be kept in a drawer by my Uncle Henry, in a purple jacket thing, and when I could, without gettin' caught, I used to take it out and go to the hired man's window at the back of the house, and begin to draw it out section by section to see how it worked, and what I could see. Well, with one section drawn out, I could see to the rail fence and the old orchard; and I could see the fuzz on the weeds noddin'; and I could see a chicken's tongue plain when it gaped; and see the chickens bat their eyes, and see the hogs bat their eyes, and flop their ears for flies; and see the bark on the trees; and birds hid among the leaves. It looked so funny, and so clear and dizzy and a little rainbowy.

And if I *pulled* out another section I could see clear to Cy McDoels' white house; and see swallows flyin' around his barn in air that had nothin' in it to the eye without the

telescope; and see green blinds on the windows, where it all looked white or nothin'; and smoke comin' out of the kitchen chimney; and between and close to his home, the corn flutterin' in the wind; and if anybody went from the barn to the house I could see 'em; and the cattle in Cy's pasture.

Well, with another section drawn out I could see clear to the Mason County Hills, and see the clumps of trees, the different houses, the roads, the field and everything almost as plain as I saw the old orchard with the first section.

And with another section drawn out I could foller up the hills, and see the sandy places, the paths, the trees; and I could drop the telescope and see all the woody country windin' around the bend of Salt Creek, which was at the base of the hills; or I could lift it up and look right into the hollow whiteness or blueness of the sky above the hills, which reminded me of a song they used to sing at Church called "Eternity"; and where the old people used to quaver "Eternity! Eternity!" And in this hollow sky above the hills I could see the most wonderful clouds lookin' like mountains of white lava that had been poured hot out of mountains or sent up like belches of steam from below, all lighted up with flames. Or at night I could see the north star, and lots of stars glitterin' right above the hills.

Now this is the way it is; only you mustn't look too close into this and ask whether I've seen all I write about standin' at the hired man's window with the telescope, or whether I first see it that way, and then walk across the orchard, the fields clear to the hills, then up the hills, then on top lookin' at clouds or stars, and then down to the river beyond, say the Illinois, so as to prove things and see if the telescope was right. Don't look too close in my contraption for writin' this book. Only you will see that I do draw out sections of the telescope and that things get plainer and plainer. And it is true, if the telescope had broke off at the second section I could guess what was beyond pretty well by thinkin' over what I had seen so far. You can tell a lot about what

is beyond by standin' just at the border; and this shows, so Miss Holcomb, the teacher, said, that you don't have to live everything to know it; but you can live just up to it and guess the rest. The same as you don't have to be a *murderer* to know what a murderer is, but only feel murder and try to do it and fail; as I did when I tried to kill my Uncle Henry with a neck yoke onct, because he was teasin' me — as I tell about later.

But there is another idea; and that is modelin'. For when Miss Holcomb was our teacher, as I tell about later, she got some clay and started to learn us how to make figures; and sometimes these figures would lean, because they didn't have good stuff in 'em; and sometimes they would get twisted because the boy or the girl tryin' to model didn't have a good eye; and sometimes the clay would dry at the bottom before the figure was lifted clear out of the clay; and so this clay would be put back, and would have to be wet over again, before it could be modeled some more; and sometimes the boy or the girl would forget to put the wet cloth over the figure, and it would dry and be crumbly the next mornin'; and all kind of things would happen. And as you will see they happened to me, no matter how hard I tried to model.

Well, now to come back to the telescope, supposin' the first section is from 12 to 17, between the time Mitch died and the time I graduated from the high school; and the second section is from 17 to 21 or about there; and the third from about 21 to 27 or so; and the fourth section from then to about 33. Now you may ask, How do you write all up to 33 standin' at the hired man's window? And if you don't stand there, then you are lookin' back from the Mason County Hills with nothin'; or with the telescope, just as you please. But why use the telescope to look back? That's easy; for the telescope may be guess or memory, just as 'it happens. And it's both all the time, no matter where you stand. If you're at the top of the Mason County Hills lookin' into the sky and up to and over the Illinois River all misty mebbe, or hid in woods and all that, there's a lot of

guess to that. There's no use inquiren' too close about the way I write this book which is called "SKEETERS KIRBY" and is about myself and lots of others; but is about myself usin' the telescope and drawin' it out as far as I could; and usin' what clay I had to make a figure of myself and not doin' very well, as you'll see.

FIRST SECTION

SKEETERS KIRBY

CHAPTER I

As I wrote about in "MITCH MILLER" the time went on. The Christmas came and was over. And, of course, Mitch didn't come back. I couldn't find him very well in dreams; and it did seem if Mitch was in heaven, or sommers, he was prevented from speakin' or sendin' any word or appearin' to me. And everything went on; and it was so cruel that nothin' more could be done about Mitch bein' dead.

And it must have been about January and awful cold, with snow piled up around the house, and of course on Mitch's grave and Little Billie's. We had it warm in the kitchen and in the settin' room where there was a base burner; but the rest of the house was like ice. And Myrtle and me had coughs all the time. Delia didn't seem so gay and willin' as she used to. Charley Werner, her beau, was comin' more now; and she didn't want to keep the fire hot in the settin' room. Things was changed and changin'; and ma was cross a good deal; and my pa sang and danced again, but he had silent spells. And one day I went into the kitchen and Delia's eyes was a little red about the lids. And I said, "What's the matter, Delia?" She said, "Nothin'." But I looked around and I saw Delia's valise in the corner, with things piled on it, that she couldn't get in; and so I knowed Delia was goin'. Myrtle came in; and she saw it too, and we both begged Delia to stay. Myrtle cried; and I was kind of lonesome; because it seemed that Delia's goin' had somethin' to do with Mitch's death; and that everything had begun to go wrong, and would get worse now all the

time. But Delia said: "The kitchen is mine, where I work; and I won't allow your ma or no one to *run* me." Delia was the most splendid girl. She allus wore dresses with starched hems and was as clean and nice as anything; and the best cook in the world. And she was witty and full of fun, bein' Irish. We went to ma about it, but ma just said: "Delia's a sass-box, and I won't stand her. Dinah has got me a colored girl. She'll be respectful anyway." Well, we had had Delia for two years and she had never been a sass-box that I knowed anything about before Mitch died. Not that his dyin' could make her one; only everything began to happen at once, as I said.

So Delia went, and Myrtle and me cried, and my pa said he wished ma could get along with Delia so we could keep her. Then Ollie the colored girl came, and she was the most fun, because she looked so funny and surprised at everything, and tried so hard to please ma; but she couldn't. Ma taught Ollie how to make a cake; and ma said, "You put in so much flour, so, and break eggs in this way, so." While ma was doin' this she broke a egg and it was bad; so ma threw it in the pail without sayin' nothin'; and so she had Ollie taught, and told her to make the cake in a few days. Ma came out to see Ollie do it; and Ollie put in the flour, and then began to break eggs into the flour; and she broke one and threw it into the pail. "What did you do that for?" said ma. "Ain't that the way you said; break four into the bowl and break one and throw it into the bucket?" "Land of the livin'!" says ma. "What's the matter with your mind, Ollie? You don't throw a egg in the bucket, unless it's bad." "You don't!" says Ollie, lookin' awful surprised. Then ma says, "Get away from here." So she made the cake herself. And after that Ollie fell asleep one afternoon by the stove and ma caught her. So ma told her to go; and Ollie got her valise and started.

When she got down to Harris' barn ma said to me, "Go after Ollie and bring her back." I ran as fast as I could, thinkin' we'd have Ollie for a girl again. But ma just gave

her a lace collar for a present and sent her off again. So Ollie cried and said, "Thank you, Mrs. Kirby." And she'd got about to the barn when ma told me to run after her again. So I did and brought her back, and this time Ollie cried more; so ma gave her a pair of gloves and sent her off for good. Ollie was sayin', "You're a good woman," and just blubberin'.

So now we was without a girl, and the house was runnin' awful. Pa was away a good deal; and ma had a terrible time keepin' up fires and getting my lunches ready to take to school; for we had nearly a mile to go down into town. My teacher this year was Miss Falk, who seemed awful pretty at first, but turned out cross and changeable. George Heigold, Charley King, Bob Pendleton, and Arthur Martin was in this room and lots of girls; only Zueline Hasson was in Springfield, as I told about in "MITCH MILLER."

Well, one day one of these boys, I think it was George Heigold, drew a awful funny picture, but awful bad too, and passed it around to us boys; and finally as I was handin' it to Arthur Martin, Miss Falk came up and caught me and took it out of my hand. It was a dirty picture; yet Miss Falk laughed right out; and then blushed; and then began to cry, and finally walked to her desk, and then back, lookin' mad now and tellin' us to stay after school.

When we did she accused me of drawin' the picture, which I never did; and when I said I didn't she told me not to lie, and she went on to say that a boy who had just lost a sweet little brother, who was now in heaven, not to say a friend, meanin' Mitch, and then would draw a dirty picture like that, had no feelin' and was as bad as a boy could be. I spoke up and says, "I never drew that picture, and I don't think you have a right to drag Mitch into this, or my dead brother." And then she grabbed me and whipped me with a pointer until I was black and blue all over my back; and so I got it for the picture, or for sayin' what I did when she insulted me; and George Heigold, or whoever it was who really drew the picture, got off free. The other boys

walked out of the room kind of silent. And outdoors some of 'em came up to me and said it was a shame. Only George Heigold and Charley King walked off together kind of jaunty, havin' escaped; and I began to wonder if they was goin' to be bad luck for me somehow, as they had been for Mitch.

When I told my ma about bein' whipped and what for, she was crazy mad; and she took Myrtle and me out of school. And when pa came home she said she was tired of everything; that she had no girl, and she wanted a rest; and she had a chance to visit her sister Joana at Leavenworth, Kansas, and she wanted to go and take Myrtle and me. So pa says, "Where'll I stay?" And ma says, "At the hotel; or you can sleep here at the house, if you can keep it warm, and eat down town. I'm tired of keepin' up fires, and I'm goin'." So pa just looked down and gave up; and ma got ready to go right off.

And I'll say right now, as I was told by Dinah, who read my future with coffee grounds, that my reputation has always been for what I didn't do, and not for what I did.

CHAPTER II

WE left in a train about ten o'clock at night. It was the funniest train; for some of the cars had lights and others was all dark with the shades drawn. We got into a lighted car; and I asked ma why the other cars was dark, and she said they was sleepers; and she told me about it. So I knew about sleeping cars for the first; but I couldn't see the use of 'em; because it seemed so wonderful to look at everything along the way, and you couldn't if you was asleep.

And I didn't sleep a wink, or want to; but looked out of the window all night. We came to the Mississippi at last and crossed it, and of course I thought of Mitch and our trip to Hannibal to see Tom Sawyer, which turned out so unhappy. The river looked so ugly and wicked, all with red and green lights showin' in it. It was full of ice too, and the bridge creaked as the train went slow and cautious across it. I couldn't help but think of what I had been told about P. P. Bliss bein' killed in a train which fell with a bridge into a river; and if it happened to him, who was religious and a writer of sacred songs, why mighten it happen to me? The train got across all right and we went on through the dark. We got to Kansas City in the morning; and ma was awful scared at the depot for fear of pickpockets. She had more than \$20 besides her ticket and a satchel full of her best clothes. So she kept Myrtle and me tight to her, as we caught the train goin' to Leavenworth.

Uncle Harvey and Aunt Joana was at the train to meet us with William Singleton, their colored man, drivin' a carriage; and the blackest horses you ever see. For Uncle

Harvey was awful rich. We drove through the most splendid streets; almost as fine as St. Louis, up to Uncle Harvey's house, which was a big frame house, with an iron fence around it. And when we got in all the rooms was warm, for it was het by a furnace. And we went to our rooms and washed up from the ride and after a while had dinner, with ma and Aunt Joana talkin' in the most intertain' and lovin' way about folks they knowed and old times, when they was girls. Uncle Harvey just set there and et, lookin' down most of the time. He had red cheeks with broke, purple veins in 'em and blue eyes. He finished his dinner quick, got up and lit a cigar and walked to the door, the sweet tobacco smoke swirlin' around him. I was crazy now to smoke. The smell of it was so good. Aunt Joana left the table and run after Uncle Harvey to kiss him good-by. She was awful lively and full of talk. But Uncle Harvey just let her kiss him like; and then went out; and Aunt Joana came back to the table and began talkin' again to ma. Aunt Joana had a cook and a maid and a woman to do the washin'; and there was William Singleton who just took care of the horses and the furnace. He slept in a room in the barn. He told me stories and let me take a whiff at his pipe; and I told William about Mitch and he says: "Yo Aunt Joana done lost a boy. He was drowned in the river. Right ovah back of that hill where that house is. You can go and see the very place." In a few days he took me and showed me. And after he was drowned, so William said, they couldn't find the body till a spiritualist looked and little Jamie came back, or his spirit did, and told where the body was. So they found it sittin' on a rock about 200 yards from where little Jamie went under; and after that little Jamie appeared to Aunt Joana. He was wearin' flowers and sayin' he was awful happy. So Aunt Joana was perfectly sure of heaven now; and she went to the spiritualist lots to get news of her little Jamie and to talk to him.

I heard my ma and Aunt Joana talk this, and she tried to get ma to go to the spiritualist and talk to Little Billie

that way. But ma wouldn't. Then I asked to go so I could talk to Mitch but they wouldn't let me.

Uncle Harvey gave Myrtle and me lots of presents and had William Singleton drive us all over town and all over the country. We slept in a warm room and had splendid meals; and I talked lots with William; and ma and Aunt Joana talked, and sometimes argued religion or somethin'. And always Uncle Harvey was silent. He never spoke at meals. Just looked down and et. Then he'd get up, light a cigar and go to the door, the sweet smoke swirlin' around him. And Aunt Joana would jump up and run like a hen flappin' its wings and runnin' to the door to kiss him good-by. For Uncle Harvey was awful good to her, givin' her rings and silk dresses and whatever she asked for; and she seemed to be askin' for somethin' all the time.

Aunt Joana gave a party for ma, introducin' her as the wife of States At-tawrney Kirby, for that was the way she pronounced attorney; and this very party led to trouble between ma and Aunt Joana. We had been visitin' now about three weeks; and at table ma and Aunt Joana had argued several times about the Bible and religion; and onct Aunt Joana was sayin' what a good man President Harrison was; and ma denied it; and every time Aunt Joana would say that he was a good lawyer or somethin' ma would say, "They say not." With religion if Aunt Joana said that Jesus had taught election and predestination ma would say, "They say not"; until Aunt Joana said one day, "Who is this 'they' you always keep talkin' about?" and ma says, "Why, the authorities, the people who really know." And Aunt Joana said, "Well, how do you know so well what 'they' know? Every time I make a point and prove it, you simply say, 'They say not' and end the argument in a superior way; and it makes me mad." Then I could see ma was mad. Only she was in Aunt Joana's house and couldn't talk back free. But it was clear we was comin' to the end of our visit though we had come to stay till spring. And it all turned on the pronunciation of the word attorney. But the quarrel

between ma and Aunt Joana turned out in the most wonderful way for ma and Myrtle, makin' them both rich, as you'll see if you read to the end of this here book.

And it looks to me sometimes that people who just go ahead and do as they please and don't care for nothin' have the best luck. And people who are careful and good and try to be fair and good to their friends have bad luck. For who would suppose that quarrelin' with Aunt Joana and breakin' up our visit would prove so lucky for ma and Myrtle?

CHAPTER III

WE had been visitin' Aunt Joana just three weeks or so and havin' a wonderful time, when one mornin' at breakfast ma said to Aunt Joana, "Why did you keep introducin' me at the party as the wife of States At-tawrney Kirby?" "Well, ain't you?" says Aunt Joana. "Yes," says ma, "but that ain't the way you pronounce the word." Uncle Harvey was eatin' his breakfast and lookin' down at his nose, and Aunt Joana referred to him and says, "Don't you pronounce it at-tawrney?" And Uncle Harvey, who had just finished, got up without answerin' and lit a cigar and started off, the same as before, with Aunt Joana follerin' him to the door, and beggin' him to decide the dispute; but he just smiled kind of mild and sad and tore away. Then ma laughed in a superior way and said, "He knows I'm right and hates to take sides against you." That made Aunt Joana furious and she says, "He doesn't know himself, particularly if he pronounces the word the way you do." "Oh," says ma, "you've talked him dumb, you've argued him to death." And Aunt Joana says, "You're my guest, even if you are my sister, and you mustn't dare to say such things." Ma laughed and said, "I will dare." And so they had it. And finally ma says, "The way to decide this is to look into the dictionary." "Yes," says Aunt Joana. So they got the dictionary and they found a dash over the a and a dot over the o; and Aunt Joana said the dot over the o meant that o was to be sounded like aw, and ma said it wasn't, it was to be sounded like u in up, and so they couldn't agree what the signs meant; and that's the way arguments always is; and the argument was just as mixed as before when they

didn't look at the dictionary to know the signs. And so it went on all morning. And Uncle Harvey came home at noon to dinner and findin' the argument still goin' on he went out to the barn and got William to hitch up the carriage and he drove off and didn't wait for dinner.

And finally the argument led up to ma and Aunt Joana accusin' each other of everything, ignorance, and story-tellin' and bein' stuck up and bein' stubborn; and all the time I sat there and listened. For I've always been listenin' and not makin' up my mind about anything. I didn't know which was right; and after I found out, it didn't help me to decide who was right in other quarrels. I was always gettin' wise after the time was over when it would have been fine to have knowed.

So Ma said we was goin' home and we telegraphed pa. Uncle Harvey went with us to the train; for ma and Aunt Joana was not speakin'. Myrtle and me cried about goin', for we had had a happy time; and we liked Leavenworth. We was gettin' acquainted with some boys and girls; and Aunt Joana's house was always warm. We had flowers at the windows and a canary and goldfish. At the same time Myrtle sided with ma, and said we didn't want to stay after all, seein' that Aunt Joana was not respectful to ma.

We arrived in a terrible cold spell, and rode to our house in the bus, almost freezin' to death on the way. Pa had been up to the house from the hotel where he was stayin' and built a fire in the stove. But it had died down while he had come to the train; and he had to fill up the stove again before the room was warm. And here we had left a house that was warm in every room; and we had to go to bed with our teeth chattering and pile the covering on us to keep from freezin'; and of course we had no girl. And pa had to go down town for bread and things for breakfast; and it was nine o'clock before we had it ready.

Then pa and ma began to talk about us children, what to do with us; and he said he'd been talkin' to old Diedrich Fleischman that had a German school and he'd send us there;

that I couldn't go back to the public school where that Miss Falk had giv me such a whippin'; then pa wanted to know why we had come home so quick and hadn't stayed all winter; and ma said, "Uncle Harvey is gettin' ready to go West and that leaves Joana all disturbed, and she may go too. He's been called on sudden business." And pa says, "That's funny — to get you out there and then have that happen." And ma says, "They couldn't help it." And I could see that Myrtle and me wasn't expected to tell pa what happened, so we just kept still.

Then in a day or two pa took us down to the German school, and bought us German readers and we began to learn the alphabet and how to read. Old Diedrich Fleischman was awful friendly to my pa and he smiled at Myrtle and me and begun to favor us right at first. The girls sat on one side of the room, and the boys on the other. Everybody studied out loud, and et licorice or candy if they wanted to, and talked to each other. But old Diedrich was particular about the lessons; and if you failed he'd send you back to your seat or some he'd slap on the back, almost knockin' 'em over. And onct John Missman the brother of Heine, that was drowned, as I tell about in "MITCH MILLER," didn't have his lesson and old Diedrich said: "Asel, Asel" and hit him in the back and sent him to his seat a flyin': I sat with Frank Wilson, a nice boy, who liked me and gave me pieces of chocolate always. I wanted somebody to take the place of Mitch for a friend; and I was hopin' Frank would; but it never quite was, or anywhere near it. I learned German fine and could read the primer before long. But I began to have fights. I seemed to stir up certain boys, though I didn't do nothin' that I could see was wrong. And onct Harry Fisher, a boy sixteen and twice as big as me, sittin' in the seat in front of me, called me a liar, and I struck him, knockin' him into the aisle. He got up and grabbed me out of my seat and we fit hard; until old Diedrich came down and parted us and kept me from bein' pounded into a jelly. And another time Phil Otis got mad at me and followed me

up the hill, and took advantage of me, givin' me an awful lickin'. I waited for him then at school and whipped him until he gave up and after that he was my friend, afraid of me and respectful. And so I began to see for some reason or another I made enemies and had to fight my way. And I had no chum like Mitch; but I wanted to have a girl like Mitch had Zueline. I tried to like Dora Cushman who was goin' to the German school. I gave her little presents, a bead ring and things, but it died down; I couldn't care like Mitch did. What was I anyway? Nothing really took hold of me. I was always hearin' and seein', but not a part of anything. Not talkin' myself really, and not one of the players. I had follered Mitch's idea of diggin' for treasure and bein' Huck Finn and Horatio. Was I always to foller, or not to do anything at all?

Bob Pendleton had never liked me since I had gone off with Mitch as I tell about in "MITCH MILLER"; and I was lonely a good deal; and sometimes it seemed if I was friends with anybody I had to go to them, or else give more than they did in order to be friends. And Myrtle was a good deal the same. For real playmates she had to take girls not really in her set; or else she was standin' offish with Maud Fisher and the other girls who lived in fine houses and visited in Chicago.

I saw a good deal of Frank Wilson; of course at school, and at his home and mine. He was always friendly and generous, and I meant to be. But about now I met Walter Denison, who was about fifteen, and had quit goin' to school. He could make anything, a telephone or a bicycle, and he could paint pictures. He liked Myrtle and came to our house this winter and spring some. And his sister liked me. She was a grown woman and a teacher. Once she took me to Beardstown; and we had to ride part of the way on the engine. It was wonderful; and I couldn't help but think of Mitch's dream of horses hitched to engines to haul the trains. Uncle Harvey had give me a ring when I left; and one day it got too tight for my finger, and my finger swelled and got blue. So I was in terrible pain, and Walter came along and took

me to a jeweler's where it was cut off. Somehow I always had some one who did things for me; and this was kind of a sign too.

In February it was fine sleighin', and grandpa came in with a bob-sled and came up to the house and said grandma wanted me to come out for Washington's birthday which was the next day. Ma was willin', only she didn't have my things ready; and she started to wash and iron some waists for me and get me ready. And she said to me, "You like it out there better than you do your home; and you like your grandma better than you do me." And I did like it out there better; but as for likin' grandma better than my own ma, that couldn't be; it was too bad and unnatural. Only I couldn't deny that grandma was always so gay and doin' so much for me that I had a better time with her than I did with my ma. And it was true that I liked the house better, and the meals, and the bed, and the warm fire in the big fire place and everything; and so ma got me ready and I went to the farm.

CHAPTER IV

I HAD a good time, but I came back in just three days and went on at the German school. And pretty soon it began to be springlike; and naturally I was thinkin' of Mitch all the time; for it was just a year ago that Mitch and me had dug for treasure in Montgomery's woods when the sap was flowin', and we found the body of Nancy Allen by the creek. Well, of course, I couldn't go to the woods on account of still grievin' for Mitch; and besides I didn't see much of the Miller family. Mr. Miller was away lots; and the girls was growin' up and didn't seem to be interested in me much, and Mary Miller and Myrtle had quarreled. So that was broke up, and it began to look like everything was breakin' up. Pa sold my pony and that ended ridin'. The old days was gone. And about now, Mrs. Miller had a boy born to her just as if God meant to send somebody to take the place of Mitch. I went up to see him; but he didn't look like Mitch. Besides they named him Charles William Miller; and it was proved to me that what is over with can't be made again. I knew Charles William could never take Mitch's place; and that it was only pretendin', if Mrs. Miller thought so. It seemed all wrong to me for Charles William to be born. He didn't come on his own hook, but to take Mitch's place, which he couldn't. And I might as well say here that he only lived three or four years and then died, as much as to say that he had tried it and it was no use; so he quit.

And one night, it was in May, just a few days after we made May bouquets, and I had tied one on Dora Cushman's door, tryin' to be in love with her so as to do what Mitch had with Zueline; and it was about May as I said, and pa came

to Myrtle and me and said we could go to the Millers' for all night. It seemed so funny; for we hadn't been playin' with the Miller girls. They hadn't invited us, and we couldn't understand it. Anyway we went; and Mrs. Miller was expectin' us and treated us just as friendly as in the old days when Mitch was there. And the Miller girls came in. Mary and Myrtle made up pretty soon and played and finally we played blindman's buff all together, though it seemed strange without Mitch and my heart wasn't much in it. And the next mornin' Mr. Miller was home for breakfast and there was a lot of gigglin' and askin' for things before he had hardly said grace; and he was talkin' lively to Mrs. Miller same as before, who was sittin' holdin' Charles William while servin' the oatmeal and things. This was all there was to the visit and we went home; and pa was there, not havin' gone down town; and the doctor was there, and ma was in bed. And pa said, "Come over, Skeet, you and Myrtle." So we went and he lifted up the blanket and there was a baby, no hair on its head, awful pink and funny, nestled close to ma. And so ma had been give a baby too. And they called him Davis, and he didn't die like Charles William did.

But as I said, things was breakin' up. My pony was sold; I didn't have any chum; the German school seemed like a piece-in, just for the time; and pa began to talk about a town called Marshalltown; and about Judge Hancock who lived there and was the Judge, and about Henry Thomas, who was a lawyer there; and about Col. Morris, a rich man who had been in Congress lots and was a friend of grandpa's way back in the early days. And it seemed pa had gone to college with one of Col. Morris' sons that had killed himself long before I was born; and I sat around, listenin' to these things as pa talked 'em over with ma. And one day a man and his wife and three children came to our house and went through it, the woman sayin', "Not many closets," "Awful little doors," "That closed stairway is bad," and other mean things. Ma answered her every word, sayin' it was a good

house and better than most people had. It had been give to us by grandpa, and we liked it anyway. They went out to the barn too; and looked at the berry bushes and the trees and shook the fence to see if it was steady; and then they went away without sayin' much. And it turned out that they was lookin' at the house to buy it; and more than that we was goin' to move to Marshalltown. And so things was really breakin' up.

Grandpa and grandma didn't come to see us now for they was mad at pa for movin', and thought it was foolish. And when I went out to the farm one Saturday grandma scolded and said after buyin' pa the house and gettin' him settled, and after he had done so well as State Attorney it was the worst thing to pull up and leave. Grandma said that pa would be sorry; and would get far away from his old friends and people who knew him and his family, and that they would make it hard for him. And later when she said this to pa before me he told her about Judge Hancock, and what a fine town Marshalltown was; and how Judge Hancock had told him of the law openin' there and that they needed a young, bright lawyer there; and what a good chance there was to make money there; and about Col. Morris who lived there and would help him; and grandma said: "You'll see! You'll be among strangers and they'll fight you. And Col. Morris is all right; but just because he knew your father years ago won't make him turn out and make a success of you." Grandpa didn't say nothin'; he was solem' and displeased at my pa for breakin' up and movin'.

So as we was goin' to move Myrtle and me didn't pay much attention to the German school, but just went when we wanted to. And it got to be about the last of June and Nigger Dick came up and packed our things. The man who looked at our house had bought it; and his children came over and crowded us out of our swing and took the barn for theirs; and the man himself and his wife came into the house when they wanted to. We were livin' from hand to mouth with our things packed and sleepin' any way we could. We had

a girl now named Ella Hines which I nicknamed "Hinesy." She was a orphan, part raised by another family, bein' about fifteen or sixteen; and she was helpin' ma for her board and the promise of a silk dress, for which ma had the material give her by Aunt Joana when we visited in Leavenworth. "Hinesy" was goin' to move with us to Marshalltown and she was terrible glad and excited about it.

Finally the Sunday came before we was goin' to move. Our things were all packed and the drays was comin' the next mornin'. Ma hated to go at the last and talked about her friends she was leavin'; though she used to before this say she never saw such a town as Petersburg. Then she'd brighten up when pa would talk about Judge Hancock and Col. Morris and how Marshalltown was bigger and in a bigger county; and how we would have lots more money; and how there was a better school, and everything would be better. And in the mornin' of this Sunday pa went and got a carriage and came up to take us for a ride over Petersburg, and to go to the cemetery too. "Hinesy" couldn't go, there not bein' room; so she went to visit the family that had raised her, and to say good-by to 'em.

We drove all around the hills; and ma said she didn't believe any town could have prettier homes; and she began to talk of the fine families here and how remarkable it was. And pa said, "You've changed your tune on that." And ma says, "Not at all; what I complained of was the riff-raff here." We went to the cemetery and I had picked some wild flowers, getting out along the road and I put them on Mitch's grave. Then we stood beside Little Billie's grave for a minute and got back in the carriage and drove to the hotel where we had the most wonderful dinner, roast chicken and ice cream and everything. We was goin' to sleep at the hotel that night; but we went back to the house because folks was comin' to say good-by; and we was goin' to sit under the oak trees; and ma had "Hinesy" come back to help her serve cake and lemonade.

Pretty soon they began to come; John Armstrong and

Aunt Caroline, Mr. and Mrs. Miller and their girls, Frank Wilson, my friend at the German school and Dora Cushman, the girl I gave the ring to; and my Uncle Henry; and some of the lawyers in town; and Major Abbott who had defended Temple Scott, as I tell about in "MITCH MILLER"; and lots of others; and ladies that were ma's friends.

My grandma and grandpa didn't come, being displeased with pa, as I said. There was most wonderful talk and lots of laughin'; and John Armstrong told about Corky Bill Rutledge which had thirteen children and a large farm. And there was a girl workin' for his family that went away and had a baby; and after a time she sent word to Corky Bill to come and get the baby. That she had to work and couldn't take care of it, and besides she had taken care of it long enough; and it didn't belong to her to take all the care of it; that the father had some duty too. So it was winter; and Corky Bill got on his horse and went to where this girl was and got the baby and wrapped it in a horse blanket and put it in front of him, restin' against the horn of the saddle and took it to his home. When he got home Mrs. Rutledge came to the door and said, "You can't bring that brat in here, Corky Bill." But Bill paid no attention. He went on carryin' the baby and kicked up the logs in the fire place and put the baby on the blanket, unbarin' its feet and legs and lettin' it wink its toes in the heat of the fire, and went out to put his horse in the stable; and John says: "What do you suppose? When Corky Bill came back into the room there was Mother Rutledge a nussin' it. And they took it and raised it up." John laughed terrible at his own story; and most every one did. But my ma thought John was coarse, and that his story was bad and she didn't laugh.

And then John told about Hi Tobin that had a piece of bottom land; and he planted it and the rain came down and swelled the river and drowned the corn out. So he planted it again and the rain came down and drowned it. So he planted it again, and it was comin' up nice and it began to rain. So Hi thought he was goin' to be drowned out again;

and he went out into the field and shook his fist up at the sky and began to cuss. "All right, God, let her rain. I wish it would rain forty feet deep and drown the world again. You drowned the world onct, why not drown her again? Open up the gates, God, and let her come." And while he was cussin' lightnin' struck a tree near him and he thought God was after him and he ran to the barn.

And so John went on tellin' about different people; and "Hinesy" was servin' them lemonade and cake; and I set watchin' everybody and listenin', and pretty soon the man and his wife and children come that had bought our house, and they began to walk around and act as if we was in the way. So folks began to get up and go and say good-by to pa and ma and by and by they was all gone. So we went down to the hotel for the night and that ended our house and Petersburg too.

CHAPTER V

THE next day I went up with the drays for our things until it was time to go to the train. And finally it was noon and we was all at the depot, "Hinesy" and ma and pa and Myrtle, and Frank Wilson and Walter Denison came to see us off. And the train came and we got on and started and went along the river for a bit; then under a bridge of the other railroad; and I could look up the hill and see Bucky Gum's house that I had passed so much going to my grandpa's farm. And then we went up a grade and got on to the level where I could see the fair grounds and the level country all around; and I could hear a meadow lark singin', just like it did when Mitch and me walked out to the farm that time I tell about in "MITCH MILLER." Then we got to Atterbery where Mitch and me got Willie Wallace to take us on his train to Havaner. And presently we came to Oakford; and there was John Armstrong on the platform to say good by again to my pa; and so we went on; and about one o'clock came to Havaner and took the bus up to the hotel. There was Col. Lambkin, who was awful glad to see my pa. He'd never seen Myrtle before or ma either; and of course not "Hinesy." Ma looked at him kind of fierce; and the Col. seemed to be a little fidgety before ma; and of course Myrtle sided with ma, and stood close to her.

It seemed we warn't goin' to Marshalltown this day; because pa had things to do in Havaner; so him and the Col. went off after dinner; and we all went to a room; my ma readin' a novel and Myrtle and "Hinesy" fussin' around about somethin', and helpin' to care for Davis. I went up and down stairs and talked to the little feller behind the desk, who had threatened to turn me and Mitch over to the

police that time that we was runnin' away, as I tell about in "MITCH MILLER." "When you goin' to run away again?" says he. "I never did," I says. "Hey! you goin' to be a lawyer too? Liar and lawyer's the same."

It was the third of July and firecrackers was already bustin' around; and I took some of my money and bought some and set 'em off; and the next day, which was the Fourth, the stage was going to Marshalltown; so pa didn't have to hire a carriage, there bein' no railroad, and it was about twelve miles.

And the Fourth was a wonderful day, clear and not so awful hot. And we all got in the stage at the hotel and started, crossin' the bridge over the Illinois, which Mitch and me had seen that night lookin' from the shed, as I tell about in "MITCH MILLER." "It's Independence Day," says pa, "and it's independence day for me." "Amen," says ma kind of like the voice of Eliza in "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

We came into the bottom on the other side, high weeds on both sides of the road, big cottonwood trees here and there; and sloughs of dead water, and the flies about et the horses up. "Is this the country you've won with your independence day?" says ma. "Not yet," says pa, "wait till we get to the table land." "I wish you could see Massachusetts," says ma, "you children, anyway. There you see hills and clear water, and beautiful forests; and it's all sweet and clean — not like this awful country."

The road went along the base of hills, and to one side of us was the bottoms just full of wonderful corn. But the people along the way looked awful poor. They was sore-eyed, wild lookin', hump-backed. "What murderous faces!" said ma. We did get to the table land and it was better; but not lovely country like it was around my grandpa's farm; and I began to compare everything and to be homesick. Pretty soon we saw a church spire and houses among trees and pa said, "That's Marshalltown!" His eye was bright and he was excited; but ma just looked and she didn't say a word.

We drove into town with firecrackers bustin' all round us; and men whoopin' and boys yellin', and a cannon in the square being fired. But I saw the queerest men in the street. They wore broad felt hats and blue shirts and red bandannas around their necks and high-heeled boots; and their hair was curly and long; and they was chewin' tobacco and spittin'. On the corner a blind man was playin' a French harp; and old women was sittin' in front of the stores smokin' pipes. The tears came into ma's eyes. And Myrtle said, "What's the matter, ma?" And ma says, "I got a gnat in my eye — that's all." "It would be better if I had a gnat in both eyes; then I couldn't see at all."

But the town looked so old. The church was old; all the stores looked old; and they all had sheds over the sidewalks, like New Orleans, pa said. And on one corner there was a white frame house with green blinds; and ma said that looked like New England. And pa says, "It's a mixture here, south and east."

The hotel was better'n the hotel at Petersburg or Havaner. So we went here and right to a room, after crowdin' through a lot of boys, who came up to stare and stand around when the stage backed up to the door. Ma just sat down by a window, her chin in her hand, and looked at everybody passin' on the street. "In the name of Heaven," says ma, "where can such people come from? Just look at them. And this is a better town than Petersburg! Why, Petersburg is a Paris compared to this. There's blue blood in Petersburg!"

"Look at this. These buzzards roosting around the street, vomiting tobacco juice." Just then a boy about 18 crossin' the street toward the hotel fell down and began to kick. And ma says, "He's havin' a fit — look!" And pa says, "No, he's drunk. There's lots drunk here to-day." And ma was right, as it turned out, for it was Harry Lindsay the son of the grocer who had fits and just fell anywhere until he was picked up or got up himself after the fit. Another man came along walkin' like a duck. And ma says, "Who's

that mallard creature?" and pa says, "That's Henry Thomas, one of the most prominent lawyers here." And ma says, "Well, I've never seen such people before; and I believe we're in for it. It may be Independence Day, but we're on the British side. That's all!"

It had got hotter; and the dust rose up to the windows from wagons and buggies passin'. Men walked around in their shirt sleeves carryin' whips, their sleeves held up by garters. Most of 'em wore high-heeled boots and black felt hats. Lots was drunk.

I went out to look around. I passed a shoemaker's shop; and hearin' somebody say, "Bum bamby! Bum bamby, bum bamby! Bum! Bum! Bum!" I looked in and there sat a man lookin' straight ahead, with big brown eyes, like a toad, soft and white in the face, awful strange and just sayin' "bum bamby" without smilin' or changin' his face at all. I thought he was crazy; but it turned out he only had the asthma; and when he got choked he said "bum bamby" and in earnest. And a little further up the street I saw a funny store where they made picture frames; and in the window was a castle in wax under a glass dome and canaries in cages. And a old woman with sore eyes looked out at me, just like the old witch in "Snow White," which Mitch and me had read in Petersburg; and in another place I saw an old harness shop which had been shut more'n twenty years, ever since the man had died. But there was a fine block on the square, bigger and finer than anything in Petersburg; and I could see that Marshalltown had good things in it and maybe as much as Petersburg.

I was walkin' back to the hotel when I saw a great big man a little drunk and kind of darin' everybody; and pretty soon a man they said was Monk McHenry, smaller but strong, came right up to him and knocked him flat; and everybody cheered, sayin' that Monk was wonderful. And he kind of strutted off and run into a kind of boy about 17; and this boy, who was named Doug Thomas, and a brother of the lawyer that walked like a duck, just pulled

out a blackjack and knocked Monk cold. And then the police came and was about to arrest Doug and Monk, when Henry Thomas the lawyer rushed in and says, "No, you don't," and scared the policemen, so nothin' was done. So while I was standin' there somebody knocked my hat off. I don't know who. I picked it up and everybody laughed and said, "Who's the new kid?" And so I kind of edged away and went back to the hotel.

They was all waitin' to go to dinner and ma scolded me and asked me where I had been. We went down and took a table. And pretty soon a man with black eyes and white hair came in. Everybody bowed to him respectful and he came to our table. It was Judge Hancock who had got pa to move to Marshalltown. Ma looked at him fierce. Myrtle's eyes was big lookin' at him. But pa was very friendly. And the judge after bein' introduced all around says, "Well, you got here. How do you like our city?" he asked, addressin' ma. "I'd rather not say," says ma. "Well, that's proper; you don't have to incriminate yourself," says the judge. "Nor the town," says ma. "You see us at a disadvantage," says the judge; "this is the Fourth and a good many rowdies, and the usual disorder of the day." "Nothing like this in New England, Judge Hancock," says ma. "No?" says the judge; "but I'd as soon have this as blue noses from tea and witchcraft, and some other things." Ma was mad and she says, "It's about the difference between Indians and white people." And just then a man came and sat at our table to talk to the judge.

He was Tecumseh Lindsay, the leading groceryman, and the father of the boy who had knocked my hat off. One of his arms hung limp; one side of his face was twisted around; his forehead was crooked, his mouth turned into kind of a scrawl, and he began to talk to the judge about the cursed drinkin' and wantin' the judge to call a special grand jury to indict bootleggers, and so stop the drinkin'. And the judge just listened to him. But Mr. Lindsay turned to my pa and says, "Here's a new field for you, Mr. Kirby.

You're goin' to start here. Begin by takin' up the side of the home. File informations in the county court for independent prosecutions and go after these bootleggers, and you'll put yourself here on the side of the church and the good people by doin' this; we need that kind of a lawyer here."

"Yes," said the judge, "that will save a grand jury and indictments and will be just as good."

And ma says: "Who will act as informant?"

"We can get plenty," said Mr. Lindsay.

"Will *you* act, Mr. Lindsay?"

"I'll get some one, if your husband will act as his lawyer."

"Then you won't serve the public in that capacity?"

"Madam," said Mr. Lindsay, "we need the right kind of a lawyer more than informants."

And now I began to notice somethin' and to notice it more and more; pa didn't really please ma, or do the way to suit her. And she was always catchin' him in doin' the wrong thing and sayin' the wrong thing; and as everybody makes mistakes you can either pass 'em over because you like the person, or approve of 'em altogether; or else you can wait and catch him in faults and put 'em down for their mistakes, which of course they must admit, because they know it themselves. And so ma had it on to pa for movin' to Marshalltown; though if she knew so much better why didn't she keep him from doin' it? It's one thing to point out a person's mistakes after they're made, and another thing to keep the person from makin' the mistake, specially if you love 'em.

CHAPTER VI

PA had already rented a house from Mr. Miles, one of the leadin' citizens. It was across from the calaboose, where men hollered and cursed all the time. The yard was full of weeds, where the crickets and things sang in the hot air. Farmers passed, throwin' dust all over the house and inside; for the house was close to the fence. It was a ramblin' house and leaned; and the rooms smelt of soot and old carpets, and old cookin'. Mr. Miles wouldn't clean it or paper it. And ma fretted and scolded all the time. Our things didn't come for about four days; so we stayed at the hotel until we got settled.

And now I began to see things repeat themselves. Charles Miles, whose nickname was "Klunker," came to "call" on me. And it was just the same as when "Shadder" Pendleton came to call on me in Petersburg. He asked me about the same questions; whether I had read "Black Beauty" and "Little Men" or read *The Youth's Companion*. He was dressed up; had on heavy squeaky shoes; and his hands was big and he kept rubbin' 'em together; and clickin' with a kind of unhandy tongue, which didn't pronounce very well.

Then we was invited down to Mrs. Morley's, who had a fine house, all to supper. And Will Morley was particular, just like "Shadder" Pendleton. We played ball too; and Will was particular about the ball gettin' in the dirt. And onct he threw it to me and it fell in some cow stuff and splattered me all up. So Will laughed; and I had to go to the pump and clean up; but I smelled so I couldn't go to the table. While I was cleanin' Larry Wright came by, a dandy lookin' boy; and he heard the story and laughed at me. Will and Larry was kind of chums. They tried to

start the nickname of "Cow" Kirby on me; but it died down after a while, as most every one rather would call me Skeet.

And then finally I got into a ball nine which had Billy Hamblin for a captain. I was shortstop and made a hit when we played the Slabtown nine, by pickin' up a grounder and throwin' it to first in time to put a batter out. And there was the Degan gang, just like the Kit O'Brien gang in Petersburg, which allus made so much trouble for Mitch and me. This Degan gang came up to Hamblin Hill, where we played, to see the game; and Pat Degan was the leader. They was already talkin' about me as a wrestler. So nothin' would do but for me and Pat to wrestle. And I threw Pat by backin' up and fetchin' him; and Will Morley was there and Larry Wright, and everybody cheered. Then, just like Jack Plunkett got mad at Ruddy Hedgepeth for bein' whipped, as I tell about in "MITCH MILLER," Pat got mad and wanted to fight, bein' egged on by Doug Thomas, who had stabbed a boy onct. But Billy Hamblin and all our crowd said no to a fight and stopped it.

A little while after this we was all invited to Colonel Morris' for dinner, and here was a fine house, nicer than anything in Petersburg. The Colonel talked to pa about politics and old times with grandpa; and Mrs. Morris who was awful aristocratic and fine lookin' talked to ma. And Frank Morris, their son about thirty, nicknamed "Skip," who stayed at home all the time, took us around to see the big yard and the horses and some deer in a park, and the peacocks. There was grandchildren here, our age, who lived in Washington, dressed fine and high-toned; and Myrtle made friends with them. So we had a good time and ma seemed to think better of Marshalltown.

In a few days Tom Harris came to see us. He clerked in one of the stores, wore starched collars and a necktie and smoked cigarettes. He was already havin' girls; and he told me things like I heard when I was six years old.

Now there began to be talk about ma goin' East to see her

folks and about pa givin' ma part of the money he got for the house. She said she had signed the deed only on the promise that pa would give her part of the money; and he did and she got ready to go. She wanted to take Myrtle, but she didn't have enough money. So she went takin' Davis and that left us with "Hinesy" to run the house.

We had lots of fun with "Hinesy" for she claimed if you smothered her long enough with a pillow she could be about dead, and could see her little brother that had died. So Myrtle and me used to get a pillow and put it on "Hinesy's" face and set on it until "Hinesy," after clawin' awhile, would be still as if she was sinkin', or almost gone. Then we'd take the pillow off and "Hinesy" would come to life after a while, and say that she had got close to heaven and had seen her brother and heard music, and had been spoke to by Jesus, who was up there to open the gates and let her in; then we took the pillow off and spoiled everything. This was called playin' heaven and it was awful funny. And so we got along this way with games and other things while ma was away. But somethin' happened.

Ma had no sooner gone than I began to notice men comin' around to the back door to talk to "Hinesy." Ma had give her the silk dress before goin'; and she had it made up; so she used to dress up at night and go walkin', leavin' Myrtle and me alone, sittin' on the steps, listenin' to the men in the calaboose or watchin' people goin' by. "Hinesy" told me about things and tried to get me to come with her once. But I wouldn't. It seemed too bad and out of place. And presently Fred Upton began to serenade "Hinesy" with a hand organ and sing:

"One day when the summer wind was blowing
Way over land and far across the sea,
I met a little blue-eyed maiden
As pretty as could be."

Then "Hinesy," even if it was nine o'clock, would get up and go out, and maybe not come home till midnight. I

was about as lonesome as a person could be at nights; and readin' "Grimm's Fairy Tales," which Aunt Melissa had give to Uncle Henry, and grandma had allowed me to bring when we moved.

One mornin' "Hinesy" hadn't come back and there was no breakfast, except what Myrtle got with pa's help. She never came back; and in a year or two I saw her on the street carryin' a baby. Fred Upton had run off; and he didn't come back for a long time either.

Ma wrote us letters tellin' us wonderful things about her folks and how beautiful it was where she was visitin'. Pa presently got a woman to come in and help with the work. And it was pretty near September, when Mr. Miles came and raised the rent. And as pa hadn't got much business from Judge Hancock, or anybody, we had to move to a red house in a big lot which belonged to Colonel Morris. It was old and smelt too. And here we was when ma returned in September.

CHAPTER VII

MA hated this house. She said it was like comin' from heaven to hell to come to it after what she had seen and where she had been. She didn't like the woman pa hired to do the work; so she fired her. Then she unpacked; and she had brought me an autograph album for a present, and Myrtle a comb and brush and mirror.

And now school took up and I found everything different from Petersburg, but better. The professor was a Yale man, and very learned, and gentle too. The schoolroom was big and light. And we had dictionaries, and encyclopædias and gazetteers. And there was maps and globes and cases full of shells and flints; and cases with butterflies and snakes and things in jars. There was two teachers to help the professor. And you could study Latin or German, or anything you wanted. It was a fine school; and I could see that Marshalltown had a side to it better than anything in Petersburg, even if its bad side was worse.

But I began to see that I had to make friends all over again. I had left the boys in Petersburg that I might have grown up with, who always knew me too, from a baby up, and here I was with boys that I couldn't grow up with all the way. I felt strange and wasn't very well received. "Klunker" Miles was in the room, and Will Morley and Larry Wright. They was older than me, and ahead of me, anyway. I didn't class anywhere; and I had been to German school and so got behind with regular studies.

There was a boy here named Brose Horne who played the accordion and hunted, and didn't do much in school; and another boy named Ed Smith, which they nicknamed

"The Iowa Kid," because he was always talkin' about Iowa; and another boy named Job Hayes, who was a mimic. These boys played Red-line around the woollen mill at night, and we had lots of fun. But Will Morley and Larry Wright, though livin' near, would never play; and they looked at me funny for playin' with these boys. But what could I do? I had no other chums; and I could see for sure I would never find another Mitch Miller.

I was goin' walnutin' with Brose Horne and huntin' rabbits with him, and playin' Red-line, as I said, and also goin' to school, but not doin' very well; for I spent all my time readin' about great men out of the encyclopædia. And about now, it was October maybe, when a family moved to Marshalltown from Ohio by the name of Newton. And their boy, nicknamed "Grinner," became my friend. He studied hard and helped his pa earn the livin' for the family, for they had lots of children. "Grinner" was in my class, but always had better marks than me; and I couldn't keep up with him, no matter how hard I tried.

The Degan boys came to school too, and I had to wrestle Pat over and over, always throwin' him, but never comin' to a fight, because Billy Hamblin and our baseball crowd always stopped it, in spite of Doug Thomas who tried to egg it on. And Billy Hamblin came to me private and said that Pat Degan would use a knife or knuckles on me and that's why he didn't want to see me fight Pat; and not to fight or even to wrestle him any more. Why didn't "Grinner" Newton, who was a newcomer too, get into these messes? What was it about me that I had to make 'em so mad? And there was Will Morley and Larry Wright that these roughs never dared to speak to, though so far as fightin' was concerned Pat Degan could have whipped either one of them too, about as easy as me.

About Christmas time the measles broke out in the school and it had to close; so I decided I'd do somethin' to earn some money, and I went to Rev. Chapin that edited *The Intelligencer* and asked to learn to set type. He let me do

it, though pa didn't like it; and pretty soon I was settin' type fine and writin' pieces for the paper just like Mitch; for I was really imitatin' him. This lasted for nearly two months; and then the measles died down and I had to go back to school; but I set type on Saturdays and was the devil. The two printers was Grant Farris and John Hall, and here I was out of place again! the devil but also part editor, and envied by Grant and John, who said I should be one thing or the other; and if I was goin' to be the devil they wanted me to devil it all the time. Rev. Chapin was good to me and helped me out. Though I could see that I was mouldin' myself out of clods and clay and tryin' to rise up, just as we worked with clay under Miss Holcomb, which I tell about later.

You see I was goin' on fourteen now; and it was March. I was always goin' hard, settin' type, huntin' with Brose Horne, tradin' for guns, writin' pieces; and I decided to get up a minstrel show. So I got Billy Hamblin in and some of the baseball crowd and Brose Horne to play the accordion and Job Hayes to be the end man. I was the interlocutor; for it was my show. And the Degan boys and Doug Thomas came and got in and tried to break it up. This here Pat Degan interrupted at one place, and I stood up and said, "You'll be still or you'll get out," and he saw that I had enough help to do it, so he only muttered something. But when the show was over, and I was washing the black off my face Brose Horne came back, havin' got through first, and said that Pat Degan was downstairs and was goin' to fight me. We held the show upstairs over a blacksmith shop. And I washed and picked up my lamp, and a tray I had brought and started right down. When I got on to the walk there was Pat and his crowd. Pat had his coat off, his sleeves rolled up and I could see I had to fight. I handed the lamp and the tray to Brose Horne and took off my coat and rolled up my sleeves and started for Pat. Billy Hamblin stepped up and said, "No you don't," and pushed me away. Then Doug Thomas says,

"You keep out of there" and struck Billy. Then Billy's crowd jumped in and punched Doug and held him off. Will Morley and Larry Wright was in the crowd, natty and cool, like box-holders at a prize fight. They just smiled at me as I walked out to Pat Degan, for I believed I could whip Pat, and I insisted on tryin' it and startin' out while Billy Hamblin and our crowd was occupied fightin' Doug Thomas. I made a rush for Pat and struck him in the face knockin' his head back; I followed up strikin' him right and left and drivin' him around a telegraph pole. He came back and began to slug me. My wind was hurt for bein' struck in the stomach; but I rallied and grabbed Pat and got ready to tumble him. He broke loose from me and struck me. I seemed to reel, to whirl, to circle, but to be an age in fallin'. But I fell all in a heap, and couldn't get up. My head seemed to be splittin' with pain, blood flowed down my cheek. Then I could hear Doug Thomas say, "Now he's got it, the little —." And Billy Hamblin says it was foul, and he and his crowd rushed for Pat and took a piece of lead out of his hand. Pat had struck me with this; and there was a lump on my temple as big as an egg and as blue as a plum. Pat stood there like a dog that has just bit and pisened somebody. And then Billy Hamblin and our crowd gave Pat a lickin' and made him run.

The tears was runnin' out of my eyes; but I was nearly blind. My head seemed to split. I tried to find my knife for I meant to kill Pat. I was shamed, outraged. But the boys crowded around me to see my lump, and while this was goin' on, Doug and his crowd stole away after Pat.

It was late when I got home. Pa was there. He saw me cryin'. He looked at my lump. Ma was in bed. But she got up, and said, "So this is Marshalltown! Heavenly Father, what will I do?" And so they bathed my lump and I went to bed with my head hurtin' so that I didn't sleep half the night.

And I kept wonderin' about things; how it was I had got into this mess; why these boys wanted to fight and hurt

me; what it was about me, whether the way I looked; or maybe I was a fightin' boy and did not know it; or maybe they was mad that I could wrestle. Anyway I could begin to see that it was all different from Petersburg where I had friends and was known and where I had Mitch before he died.

CHAPTER VIII

THE next morning pa went down town and caught Doug Thomas and kicked and cuffed him all over the street. He had egged Pat Degan on me; he was older and a leader. And ma said, "What kind of a town is this where two well raised boys like Will Morley and Larry Wright will stand by and look at murder and never interfere?" There was somethin' in the newspaper about it, he sayin' that "Mr. Kirby engaged in a disgraceful bout with Douglas Thomas on account of a boy scrap between Pat Degan and Arthur Kirby." Henry Thomas the lawyer, bein' already unfriendly to pa, because he had come to Marshalltown and was tryin' to get law business, took this as a start to be an enemy and threatened my pa. And ma says: "There's the threads of our shrouds. The Fates have begun to weave already."

But anyway the fight had one good effect: Pat Degan didn't bother me any more; and seein' that I could fight I wasn't teased by anybody any more; and even Will Morley and Larry Wright treated me more friendly.

But we was havin' a hard time to get along. Myrtle didn't like the girls; we couldn't keep a hired girl; and pa seemed to be strugglin' with everyone; and all that grandma had warned him about seemed to come true.

The summer came on and I worked in *The Intelligencer* office, becomin' nearly a printer; and I was writin' for the paper, besides havin' time off to go to Spudaway swimmin' with Brose Horne, or off campin' when "The Iowa Kid" and Job Hayes was along. I didn't dress well like Will Morley and Larry Wright. They had a tutor durin' the summer, and rode about some with the girls. But I worked;

and for play ran with Brose Horne and "The Iowa Kid" and Job Hayes. "Grinner" Newton in a way was my best friend; though he didn't have time to play much, as he was always helpin' his pa. But I went up to see him, and he came to see me. He was to me what I had been to Mitch, a kind of Horatio. Not that I had troubles much, but I had more than him. And he listened to mine. He didn't have no fights and nobody bothered him. I don't know why.

The school took up again, and I can't remember much about this winter, except I just went along and didn't get very good marks. I kept readin' in the encyclopædia, and about now an agent came along and sold pa "Bryant's Collection of Song" for a present for ma. He wrote her name in it fine like printin' script; and I read this and looked lots at the pictures of the authors. And I read Grimm some, and a little of the "Arabian Nights." But mostly I spent evenings in Monk Slidell's barber shop, listenin' to the men and older boys talk; or on Saturday I went with Brose Horne to shoot ducks by the river. And onct when we took Charley Cummings along, we all had long muskets we could hardly carry. We was crawlin' through the thicket, and I looked back and saw Charley's gun pointed right at me, the hammer cocked and the cap glit-terin' while the brush and sticks were hittin' the hammer every step. I don't know how I was saved; so many was killed or drowned along the way. And I was kicked by a horse; and went under the third time; and was knocked down by lightnin' and yet I didn't get kilt.

Just the same I was always pretty busy, and this winter beside goin' to school, I set type and sold papers and did things around, makin' what money I needed besides havin' some saved which came to a good use, as I tell a little later.

It was in the middle of the winter or past, may be, when pa cut his finger with a knife; and it began to hurt right off. He didn't sleep any that night and the next mornin' his arm had red streaks up it, and he was awful sick. Old Dr.

Hanson came right down and said pa had the blood poisonin'; and he did, and went from bad to worse. He went down to skin and bones; and we run out of money, and I had to give what I had saved. Grandma came over to help with the house and help take care of pa. She said to me: "Remember! leave well enough alone. There was your popie prosperous and respected, and had a house; and here he is sick and poor and fightin' for a livin'; and when you grow up, remember; leave well enough alone. I don't know what will become of you, Skeet; you're as restless as eternity; but you're always at work at somethin', and may be you'll get through."

You can't imagine how funny it seemed to see grandma in our poor little house, after knowin' her in her big comfortable rooms, with her bureau and couch, and bird cage and all her nice old things, around her; it was like takin' a fine picture out of a lovely, suitable frame and puttin' it in a cheap, ugly frame. But if it hadn't been for her, pa would have died, I believe. She never left him; and here she was an old woman, over seventy; but as strong and able as ma, or more so.

And finally one day Dr. Hanson came and couldn't find no pulse in pa; and may be there wasn't things goin' on! Pa says, "How am I, Doc?" And the doctor said, "Well, if you have things to arrange it might be better." And pa says, "Have you done all you can, Doc?" And he says "yes." "Well," says pa, "how about some whiskey?" And the doctor says, "It won't hurt — it will be good." So pa says to me, "Run up to Jim Wrenn's drug store and get me a pint of his best — and tell him what I want it for."

So I got out and ran all the way. But when I got there and asked for the whiskey, Mr. Wrenn was scared to sell it, because the editor of the other paper and the church did nothin' but scold about whiskey, and prosecute drugstores; and every spring they had the election about saloons, and there was never any other question talked about or voted on in Marshalltown.

And there was another thing: Just a few months before this two men came to the Dekalb Hotel, which was run by an old man, Mr. Bissell, whose son kept a drugstore. And one day these two men came to Mr. Bissell and asked him if he couldn't get his son to sell 'em some whiskey, that they was sick. And they complained about their pains, and said they had to have the whiskey. So Mr. Bissell went with them to his son, and said: "These men are boardin' with me and are all right. They are sellin' insurance, and they need some whiskey for a little medicine." So Mr. Bissell's son sold it to 'em; and after they got it they said: "We're detectives and you're under arrest." So old Mr. Bissell was so mad and so scart that he dropped dead. And then a crowd collected and was goin' to lynch the detectives; but they was slipped off by the editor of the other paper, and by some of the deacons of the church; because it was the church committee that had hired these here detectives to do their spyin'.

For this reason Mr. Wrenn was scart to sell me the whiskey; but I stood and said "you must," and finally he said, "I like your father and you're a brick of a boy, and I'll be darned if I don't take a chance."

I ran back with the whiskey and pa drank it all and began to sweat. Then he fell into a sleep and grandma sat by and looked at him. She loved him about to death; and when she saw so clear again that he had her fightin' blood, she was all happiness and hope. "He'll get well," she said. And he slept all the night through and began to mend from that time; and this proved to me that God does make whiskey; for anyway as God makes corn which has whiskey in it, don't He make whiskey, when it's easy to get whiskey out of corn, and only by lettin' it sour?

We were at the lowest now we ever was. I was only goin' to school part of the time; and except for Brose Horne and "Grinner" I should have died of loneliness. Grandma gave me a pair of roller skates and I learnt and became a racer, the swiftest for two miles in town or anywhere around.

Spring came and pa was still in bed, weak and about a skeleton, and grandma had to loan us money to live on.

One afternoon about the time the robins began to sing and people began to build I was watchin' Bill Randall carryin' brick and mortar where Widow Potter was building a house; and pretty soon Skip Morris came along, the son of Col. Morris. He was drinkin' some, but looked smilin' and red-faced. Just then Jud Upton came along, the first I had seen of him since "Hinesy" disappeared. And Bill says to Jud, "Do you associate with Skip Morris, Jud?" "Yes," says Jud, "why not?" "Well, I don't," says Bill. "Never have since he married that Swede." Skip had married a Norwegian girl, that couldn't speak English, the time before when he was drinkin'; and Col. Morris had to come forward and pay her off for a divorce, as she wasn't in Skip's class or the family's. And this wasn't the first time he'd done this; every time he got drunk he'd marry somebody. So Bill says to him, "Who you goin' to marry now?" "You don't know the human heart," says Skip. "I can't marry except for love. I loved this woman you call a Swede." "That does settle it," says Bill; and he lifted a hod full of mortar and went into the house. All the time I was standin' there listenin'; and pretty soon Bill came out again, and Skip got out a bottle and passed it, sayin', "Come forgive, forget." And Bill says, "Well, I can forgive, but not forget"; and he took a drink and Jud did; and then they talked; Bill quit work and they all went off arm in arm.

This has no bearin' on me, except this: The next day Col. Morris came to see my pa, bringin' with him George Hervey, a fine-lookin' man, a lawyer that I had heard my pa talk about, as a gentleman and one of his friends. And this was the talk: A man had been held up the night before at the edge of town, and Skip Morris, Jud Upton, and Bill Randall had been arrested for it. They was in drink when arrested. And Col. Morris had gone to see Mr. Hervey about defendin' Skip; and Mr. Hervey said he'd do his best; but he wanted my pa as a helper; or he would help my pa,

since he didn't do criminal work like my pa. So there was my pa rallied out of death almost, and a fine case come to him through Mr. Hervey; and partly because Col. Morris had knowed my grandpa long ago. So we were all happy; and I was dancin' about the kitchen, glad of the good luck that had come.

Col. Morris had lots of old houses in town and he deeded one to pa for his fee. It was in a big yard with old apple trees in it and a barn. And as soon as pa got his deed we all went over and looked it through. It was pretty old and needed fixin'; but there was such a wonderful yard, with lots of trees, and snowball bushes and lilac bushes, and some fruit trees that only needed care to bring 'em back.

Pa got up almost from a sick bed and went to court to defend Skip Morris. Henry Thomas was assistin' the state attorney because you see it was kind of a whiskey case, because Skip and Bill and Jud was drunk at the time; and so the church was sayin' there was a moral question in it above robbery, and got Mr. Thomas to help prosecute.

Doug Thomas was lookin' up witnesses; and the church did all it could against pa, sayin' that those fellows had done it through whiskey and should be punished; and even Judge Hancock was agen pa; but pa rose up better'n ever, even better than in the Temple Scott case that I tell about in "MITCH MILLER." There was no theaters and nothin' in Marshalltown but court; so I went all the time to hear cases tried. The end of it was pa cleared Skip with the jury; and the Col. became pa's fast friend. And he made lots of friends by the case. We had a home now of our own, and better days came. But still it seemed pa was fightin' the church, and the bank, and all the crowd that didn't want saloons, or billiard parlors or dancin', but they wanted church and Sunday school and missionary meetings and givin' so as to go to heaven when you die.

CHAPTER IX

WE moved in in the summer. Ma had the house all cleaned and papered. And I had to help; and also sawed the wood; and we set out flowers and fruit trees and repaired the fence and the barn and cleaned up the yard. I wanted to go over and see grandma this summer; but I couldn't. And I only had time to swim a few times with Brose Horne. "Grinner" helped me some, just like Mitch used to; and so pretty soon school took up and things changed.

This year Miss Holcomb came as one of the assistants to the professor. She was little, with a thin voice, which she could make deep for speakin' pieces, for she was a elocutionist. She could paint pictures too; and she made up a class to model things out of clay, as I have hinted about already. And she said, "Here's the clay, all shapeless, and it's for us to shape it into something. You must shape your lives too, out of the clay of you; and you must stiffen the clay with sticks or skeletons of will, wisdom, love, or sometimes hate or disgust will stiffen it and hold the thing you make to its form." I tried this modellin' and found that the clay at the bottom of your figure becomes hard overnight; and the thing you make leans, and crumbles, or gets too wet; or dries and crumbles; and you have all this to think about; before you see that your own life is something being lifted out of clay that turns to clods; and something that leans or crumbles if you don't mind.

Miss Holcomb lived at the Dekalb Hotel, in a big room with a grate in it; and some of the pupils went to see her at night to hear her talk, or for books to read; for she had lots of books, and read lots herself. You see I didn't know

much, and had never read much; but I was interested in Miss Holcomb on account of this modellin'; and wanted, for some reason, to have her for a friend. She got up a elocution class, and gave private lessons to Virgil Reese, who was a man about 22 and teachin' school himself near Marshalltown. Will Morley was Miss Holcomb's favorite, and Larry Wright in a way, for she was teachin' 'em Latin, so they could go away to school. She was kind to me, but treated me as if I didn't know enough to count. And now nearly every night I went to see her instead of goin' to Monk Slidell's barber shop; for she had apples to eat, and there was lots of interestin' talk, or sometimes a elocution lesson; and I loved to hear Virgil Reese recite "The Raven" with Miss Holcomb teachin' him the lines. He'd say:

"And my soul from out that shadow that lies
Floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—Nevermore."

And Miss Holcomb would say: "When you say 'Nevermore' hold both arms at right angles from the shoulder, parting the hands to emphasize an emotion of resigned despair." So Virgil would try it over and over; and Miss Holcomb would say, "That's better"; and then he'd sit down and eat an apple. And then Will Morley would drop in with Susan Gillespie, who was readin' Emerson and wanted to be a philosopher.

And one night when I was there and Miss Holcomb had just finished with the lesson with Virgil Reese he sat down and they began to talk, and Miss Holcomb said: "I'm in the same position as you, only I am a woman and it is more difficult for me. But every drop of my blood beats in time with the philosophy of atheism. The degrading part of it is that I — you and I — have to hide our convictions for the sake of bread, and it makes my English blood boil; I have loaned Will Morley Ingersoll's oration on 'The Gods' and even if I can't teach my philosophy openly I can instruct and guide promising minds, here and there. For I think

Will is one of the finest talents I have known. At sixteen he shows marks of positive genius. Have you ever noticed how much he resembles Lord Byron?"

Virgil said no to this; and then he went back and said if the school directors where he taught knew that he was a free thinker he'd lose his school; and that he hid it by going to church and contributin' to the minister. And he said that in some quarters he was regarded worse than the devil; and that once in the village near where he taught two old men said, "Look! there he goes—he don't believe in nothin'." "Such is the way thinkers are regarded," said Virgil, "and those are the difficulties of pioneers of thought."

Just then Will Morley came in, and Miss Holcomb said, "Turn your profile, Will," and he did. "There," said Miss Holcomb. "Didn't I tell you? You mustn't get vain, Will, if we think you resemble Lord Byron." I thought so, too, from lookin' at his pictures in the encyclopædias; and Will said, just overlookin' the compliment paid him as if it was nothin', "I brought the lecture back by Ingersoll." "And what do you think?" said Miss Holcomb. "Of course it's unanswerable," said Will, crossin' one leg to the other, and lookin' sad, but superior. Pretty soon Miss Gillespie came in and she was carryin' a Emerson, but wanted to read Epictetus, which Miss Holcomb had.

So in this way I came to be goin' with Will Morley a little more than before. And onct he came for me to go walkin'. It was about January or February, but not very cold, and only a little snow. We started out and he headed for the graveyard, and went in, and I was right after him. We came to a grave, and it had a stone, but I couldn't see the name it was so dark. And Will began to cry; and he said he cursed the scheme which separated people in death, and never reunited 'em; and that there was no heaven, or God, or nothin'; and that the Bible was a book written by barbarous men, and not true. And he went on between sobs talkin' this way; and sayin' that I couldn't understand his feelin', that no one could who hadn't lost a loved one. Well,

I'd never lost a girl, but how about Mitch? I had been through that; but I didn't say anything. I just listened to Will and watched him. We left the graveyard and I walked with Will to his gate; and there he turned and said "Good night" in an awful sad voice; and I went on.

Somehow I didn't win Miss Holcomb much. She was all for Will Morley and Larry Wright, and yet she was good to me and tried to get me to read some novels, which I couldn't. I didn't understand her at all. And ma said that she was a dreamer, and didn't have good sense or she wouldn't make a fool of Will Morley by gettin' him to believe he was another Lord Byron.

Miss Holcomb this year offered a prize for the best essay on the subject of "Good Manners," so I thought I'd try for it; and I began to think who had the best manners, and it seemed to me them had that was the kindest. So I wrote an essay around this idea. Will Morley and Larry Wright didn't try for the prize; for Will was writin' a epic on the Civil War; and Larry didn't care for such things. But Lizzie Baker tried for it, and was my only adversary. Well, I won, though Miss Holcomb said that my grammar was enough to lose the prize, except for the thought, which was good. The prize was a lovely folder containing Mrs. Browning's poem, "He Giveth His Beloved Sleep." It had flowers and angels on the back, and was awful pretty. But when I was up to Miss Holcomb's one night and Will Morley was there she began to talk about my gettin' the prize, which Will had not heard of, or seemed not to have heard of it. And she said, "Skeet won the prize and I am very proud of him. If I can model his grammar up, like we shape the clay, perhaps he can go to larger victories." And Will said, half interested, his teeth shut together, as he spoke, which was his way, "What was the prize?" "A beautiful folder," said Miss Holcomb, "containing the poem 'He Giveth His Beloved Sleep,'" and Will said, "Why satirize the author of the prize essay?" and Miss Holcomb laughed, and came down on her knees with her hands and said, "For shame, Will.

"Tis excellent to have a giant's strength, but not to use it like a giant." So I hated the prize and wisht I hadn't won it. And what was this a symbol of? Maybe I'll think later.

And just about now I began to hear of Winifred Hervey, the daughter of Mr. Hervey, my pa's friend; and about her bein' such a wonderful girl. She never went to school, and never went out in the town, but she read all the time; and as far as I could learn she was lots like Mitch, even if she was a girl. There was no way to see her though, because she never went out, except walkin' into the country, as I heard it; and I wasn't invited there; and our mothers didn't call on each other, but kind of shied away from each other, as if neither could make the advance. They said in Marshalltown that Mrs. Hervey was the smartest woman there; that made my ma mad, for she'd never admit that anybody was smarter than her. And so later it came about that my ma and Mrs. Hervey met, as I tell about, on equal terms, and tried each other out. And it was then that I met Winifred that I had wanted to see so long.

CHAPTER X

IF Miss Holcomb had picked me out for John Keats or somebody, as she picked out Will Morley for Lord Byron, she might have made a fool of me. But instead she didn't see me for anybody or anything, and how could she? I wasn't anything. I had tried to be Huckleberry Finn, and then Horatio, and I had failed; and now I was just nothin', and didn't have my lessons very well, and didn't have any gift to do anything more than another.

We had had a wonderful year with Miss Holcomb. Will Morley and Larry Wright had got along fine with Latin; Susan Gillespie had read Emerson and Epictetus; the modellin' class had done well, and I was beginnin' to improve my grammar. For Miss Holcomb kept scoldin' me for droppin' my g's; and for sayin' "ain't," and usin' the singular verb with the plural subject; and callin' pa, pa and ma, ma. And as to this Myrtle had visited Maud Fisher in Petersburg and had come back with lots of ideas about your napkin, your knife and fork, and about grammar; and especially about sayin' ma and pa. We began to say papa and mama, or sometimes father and mother.

"Grinner" Newton came over one day to help me mow and rake the yard, and he was carryin' a Latin grammar. "What's that?" says I. "A Latin grammar," says "Grinner." I looked at him. Could it be possible he was studyin' Latin secret, and so goin' ahead of me without my knowin'? "Are you doin' this yourself?" says I. "No," says "Grinner"; "Suevie Ross is home from Montreal and he's helpin' me. He's been studyin' Latin and Greek for 7 or 8 years, and reads 'em like English, and he's teachin' me."

I had heard about Suevie Ross. He was a far-off character, like a prince or somethin', for he was always away in Montreal goin' to school; and they all said he was the most wonderful boy in town; though he was now about 19 or 20 maybe. I was curious to see if he was as wonderful as Mitch Miller; so I asked "Grinner" to take me to see Suevie.

The next day we went and on the way "Grinner" told me he was studyin' hard so as to graduate from the High School this comin' year. Well, here "Grinner" had got up ambitions for himself that he hadn't told me. And it meant if he never did, and I didn't find it out, he'd graduate in the spring and so leave me in the lurch. We had been friends, and classmates up to now. And so I says to "Grinner," "How did you happen to think of this without tellin' me?" "I was goin' to tell you," says he. "This Latin has nothin' to do with it. I am just doin' this for extra."

We got down to Suevie's, for it was down hill; and there he was sittin' in a hammock, under big trees, readin' a Greek book, the same as English, and makin' notes. He went on to say that Agamemnon came home from the Trojan war and found his wife Clytemnestra married to Ægisthus; and that Clytemnestra got Ægisthus into a bathtub and hit him with an axe and killed him, so as to have him out of the way. And Suevie said he was writin' a play about Clytemnestra; and that he couldn't leave what he had wrote around, but had to hide it, because his father would take it up town and show it everywhere and say it was equal to Shakespeare. How funny to have a pa that admired you so much! I seemed to displease my pa some, but anyway not to really please him. He didn't like my learnin' the printers' trade; he didn't like to have me work around town and earn money; he didn't like my runnin' with Brose Horne; though I heard he said that I was a good boy, and had never given him no trouble at all.

And as I sat on the grass lookin' at Suevie I could understand why Suevie could read Greek and Latin, and I couldn't.

It was because he had such a big head; and I had a little head. Suevie's head was already bigger'n Daniel Webster's, so his pa said; and anyone could see it was true. And I remembered now lookin' into a book called "Science of Life," which had about heads in it, and how children are born; and it said that nobody without a big head need never to hope to do nothin'; well, what could you do with your clay if you only had so much? You could mould all you pleased without doin' anything to speak of. Just the same I could learn Latin of Suevie, and I thought I'd try, since "Grinner" was doin' it; and Will Morley and Larry Wright with a tutor. So I began this first visit, and after the lesson we went up to Suevie's house and there was a whole room full of books that belonged to Suevie's father and to Suevie, and I looked at 'em and began to wonder what was in 'em, and if I could borrow some, sometime.

Now you see how things was workin'. With Miss Holcomb who was goin' to put me into her rhetoric class in the fall, and with "Grinner" and Suevie teachin' me Latin. All the time I was awful busy workin' on *The Intelligencer*, and sometimes sending dispatches to the St. Louis paper about any big snake that was killed near Marshalltown, or anybody that was murdered; and one time I wrote some verses and signed 'em "Willis Aronkeil" and they was printed, after the grammar was corrected by the editor or somebody. The clods always had to be taken out of me and everything I did.

But all of these things was nothin' compared to something that happened now. In August when the moon was full, Miss Fahrenstock, a woman from New England, which had become ma's friend, was givin' a musical and card party. She had a lovely house and barn, and was a old maid with lots of money, and travelled around and knew cities and everything.

I noticed ma readin' and recitin' to herself from Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar"; and it turned out that ma and Mrs. Hervey was goin' to speak the quarrel between Brutus and Cas-

sus, and that it was part of the program between the music. Ma was Brutus and Mrs. Hervey Cassius. So Myrtle and I were all excitement. And when we got to Miss Fahrenstock's, there was Japanese lanterns strung between the trees and lots of people around ma and Mrs. Hervey, Tom Harris, Will Morley, Larry Wright, Tecumseh Lindsay and his boy that had fits, Susan Gillespie, "Grinner" Newton, and lots that I didn't know. Pa wouldn't go; Miss Holcomb was away, not havin' come back from her vacation. There were chairs on the lawn; and pretty soon after some music ma and Mrs. Hervey came on the porch and began to act Brutus and Cassius. And Mrs. Hervey began:

"That you have wronged me doth appear in this:"

And so it went, Mrs. Hervey gettin' more active and excited as ma did; and it was plain they was tryin' to outdo each other. Finally ma said with terrible scorn and a curl on her lip, just like I had seen her when she was mad at pa:

"There is no terror, Cassius, in your threats;
For I am armed so strong in honesty
That they pass by me as the idle wind
Which I regard not."

But when Mrs. Hervey said:

"Come; Antony, and young Octavius, come,
Revenge yourselves alone on Cassius,
For Cassius is aweary of the world:"

she just sighed and wailed it out; and Virgil Reese, who was there and was sittin' close to me, said to somebody: "That's fine, as good as Barrett. I wish Miss Holcomb could hear this."

And so it ended and the crowd applauded; and ma and Mrs. Hervey came out on the porch from the room, holdin' hands and smilin' to each other and on the crowd, and bowin' right and left. So some went in the house to get ice-cream

and cake and some stayed out; and I thought I'd go in to tell ma how well she had done.

There was a kind of corner chair between the piano and the wall, and I could see, as I came in, the lovely face of a girl about my age. Her eyes were bright as flames, her face pale. She was talkin' and laughin'; and I could hear it was about Shakespeare. Will Morley and Larry Wright, Susan Gillespie and some others was standin' near her, around her, their eyes wide, their mouths open. The girl was Winifred Hervey, that I had heard so much about, that I had wanted to see so long; and she was the daughter of Mr. Hervey, the lawyer who had wanted pa to help him. So I kind of sidled near, not knowin' what to do or how to get acquainted; for I couldn't depend on Will or Larry to introduce me. And all of a sudden Winifred said: "Here's Skeeters Kirby, protagonist of Huckleberry Finn and Horatio, and now quite himself, as a denizen of Marshalltown." They all turned and looked at me. And Winifred extended her hand and said: "I am Winifred Hervey, Skeet, the owl, the baker's daughter, what you will; and if they will not introduce us, like a bold maiden I make myself known to you, and you can be Sir Galahad, if you choose, and shame me back into virginal seemliness." Everybody laughed.

And Will Morley said: "You overlooked one accomplishment, Winifred; he's the winner of the prize for the best essay; subject, 'Good Manners.'"

"An excellent theme for all to ponder," said Winifred, "and deserving a prize." And she give Will a look that made him kind of start.

"What would you say for a prize to a folder with angels and flowers on the back, and within the folder the poem, 'He Giveth His Beloved Sleep'?"

Larry Wright and Tom Harris laughed loud at this remark, for it meant that my essay would put anyone to sleep. But Winifred said: "You don't presume to patronize as noble a poem as that, Mr. Morley?"

"Not at all. I was thinking of the title of the poem as related to the title of the essay and its contents."

"Have you read the essay?" asked Winifred.

"No, not wishing to sleep," said Will. And they all laughed.

And Winifred said: "If you slept over Skeet's essay you would be guilty of worse manners than to make fun of it when awake, as you are doing now. I wish I could find a potion as somnolent as reading is to some people I know. I had an uncle who fell asleep over Shakespeare. He used to read Shakespeare instead of taking Dover's powders. Skeet, you may not know it; I read your essay; Miss Holcomb let me see it. You know as little about grammar as I do; but there wasn't a thing in your essay that I had ever seen before, and if I had written it I should have filled it top full with other people's thoughts."

My heart began to warm. Winifred was my friend; but why? The others kind of drew away, because every time they said anything she flung arrows at 'em. And I came over and took a chair by Winifred that she motioned me to. Yes, the second section of the telescope began to be extended this evening.

And Winifred said: "You're a printer, aren't you; and you write for the papers? — Oh, I've heard all about you. My father has told me, and I think you're just splendid. You know I walk a lot with my friend, Mrs. Turner; and this fall you must come over on Saturdays and we'll go out to Big Creek; and I want you to meet Dr. Starrett, and Mrs. Starrett. They're my friends and they will be yours. And Virgil Reese is a friend of the doctor's. They live in Marietta on the river. He's a scientist and you can learn worlds from him without studying. You ought to join the Scientific Association. I will, if you do. They have wonderful papers there on all sorts of learned subjects. What are you doing at school?"

I told Winifred; and she said: "I never went to school. I have educated myself out of my father's library. You

must come and see our books and mine; and get acquainted with my father, whom I adore. You'll love him too; and he already loves you, Skeet!"

"What?" I says, lookin' straight at Winifred, because she surprised me sayin' "Skeet" so quick and clear. "You don't know what you are, Skeet, and what is in you. I knew as soon as you came into my presence. You don't need to bow down to Will Morley, Larry Wright, 'Grinner' Newton or anyone, just because they are better students than you. I'll venture anything that if you put your mind on it, you could pass any of them this year, and graduate at the high school, not that that means much; but you'd just as well, since you are in school. You must. And I'll be your friend. May I?" "Yes," I said, something choking me in my throat. "And will you be my friend?"

"Yes — forever — Winifred." Winifred looked at me, her eyes growing deep like a bird's that begins to sing. And just then Miss Fahrenstock came over to Winifred and asked her to recite. She didn't say she couldn't, or she didn't know anything to recite. She said, "Why, yes, if it will please you."

And Winifred got up not a bit scared, just happy and at ease, and recited a long ballad, which they said was by Macaulay, without a break or forgettin' at all. And it went around the room that she had committed it to memory that evening before supper while Mrs. Hervey was combing her hair.

After that the party was over, and I went home with something hurting me and giving me happiness too, just swirling around my heart, like water swirls around a rock in the river. And I had a new vision. The second section of my telescope was drawn out, first insensibly and then quite definitely. I knew that a change had come in my life.

SECOND SECTION

CHAPTER XI

MISS HOLCOMB came back to the school and took me into her rhetoric class. Suevie Ross had returned to Montreal. Will Morley and Larry Wright had gone away to school in Ohio. "Grinner" Newton was ready to read "Caesar," and I worked hard in order to keep pace with him. I had set my mind upon finishing at the high school this year. Winifred had encouraged me to do this. And between my studies and my work at *The Intelligencer* and what I had to do at home, I was full of work.

Father, for now I was compelled to call him so, since Myrtle corrected me whenever I said pa, seemed to be on a better footing. He had made friends; we had built the house over. We had repaired the barn. We had bought a horse and a phaeton. Mother had brought a piano into the house; and Myrtle was taking lessons from a travelling teacher, who visited the different towns around us.

But Winifred was my joy, my companion. She had really taken the place of Mitch. I had found a friend at last. She had brought me into her room of books. She had told me of Scott and Dickens and Thackeray; of Trollope and Anstey and George Eliot; she had read to me out of Tennyson and Browning; she had loaned me the *Spectator*; but above all she had introduced me to Hoffman and Poe. And these last I read with flaming concentration. I had made for myself a room in our house, and put a stove in it which I bought at a song. Mr. Hanna, the furniture maker, had made a table for me, in pay for my carrying lumber from the yard up a long flight of stairs. It had almost broken my back. But I had the table, all with a drawer and a green

baize top. "Grinner" used to sit with me in this room; and after we had finished the Latin lesson, I read him a story of Poe's. We both thrilled with terror; and poor "Grinner" would hurry away through the shadows, crossing the railroad and going up a dark hill to his house.

But all through this fall my happiness was increased by the friendship of Winifred. She had never studied grammar or rhetoric, but she had read enormously, read everything, it seemed; and she corrected me so gently that presently I began to overcome singular verbs with plural subjects, and the use of "ain't" and the like solecisms.

Some Saturdays she was ill and couldn't go into the woods. Then I would go off with Brose Horne, hunting ducks, or gathering walnuts. Myrtle didn't like Winifred; neither did my mother. And so on my part there was always a kind of secrecy in my rambles with Winifred.

I didn't know what was the matter with Winifred. She was vital and gay always; sometimes quite pale, however. So it would be, even after we had planned a walk to Big Creek, I would be met at the door by Mrs. Hervey who would say that Winifred was not well enough to go. Then I would look up Brose Horne or "Grinner" Newton and spend the Saturday with whichever one I happened to find.

There was a hill which Winifred and I frequented, overlooking Big Creek, covered with a clump of oak trees, a larger tree than the rest standing apart. Winifred called the hill Parnassus, and she called a grove near the Grove of Eleusis; and we had the Vale of Tempe and Arcadia and even Mt. Ida in one of the higher hills.

The slope of this higher hill was to the east; the afternoon and the setting sun were back of it. Winifred and I would sit here in this lovely September and October, listening to the fall sounds, the scamper of the squirrels, the call of crows and the littoral murmur of leaves. We always had a book with us and Winifred read to me. We brought luncheon with us which her mother prepared for us; and we walked home under the moon, finding Mrs. Hervey waiting for us, and

supper saved warm for us when we were very late. We held hands along the way; and once Winifred said to me: "You see I have always been so lonely, having no brothers or sisters; and because I have not been well, I have not gone to school, and made friends there. You see, Skeet, I have been a spider, waiting back on my web for some friend to come along, and every now and then my web would tremble. Some foot had touched it. I would look out, but the intruder had gone; or else it was some one I did not want. Now I felt my web tremble—it was you! For I had heard a lot about you, before I saw you. I heard about that cruel fight you had with Pat Degan. I knew your father was having a hard time, and I made my father get your father to help him in the Skip Morris case. My father told me about your working on *The Intelligencer*, how busy you always were; and if you will forgive me, I knew you didn't have many books. I understood it all; your coming to this strange town, leaving your old mates, your grandfather and grandmother. I wanted to see you, to be your friend. But sometimes I was ill; and I have been changeable too. I didn't know whether you'd understand a girl, who wants a boy for a friend. For that's the way I want you, and you are my friend, aren't you, Skeet?"

"Oh, yes — so much your friend, Winifred."

"Well, that night at Miss Fahrenstock's you came in so shyly. Your eyes were bright as planets and took in everything. I knew by your face that you could be my friend. And when I saw those two boys, Will Morley and Larry Wright, trying to patronize you, it made me furious."

"Do you know what you are, Winifred? You are an eaglet." "I may be, but you are an eagle. You are just mewing your wings, Skeet — and some day, like Hans Andersen's Ugly Duckling, you will soar away from us all — and from me."

"Not from you, Winifred."

"Oh, yes, Skeet, I see it. For I have a gift that you haven't developed yet. It is the gift of prophecy. And I know

this minute almost everything that will happen in the future. Do you believe in God, Skeet?"

"I don't know, Winifred."

"Well, all I have to say is just read and think."

"I have thought," I said; "but I haven't read. And I haven't made up my mind about anything. I neither believe nor disbelieve anything; and I feel that I never shall. I have never been baptized; and I see just as much evidence that there is no God, as I see evidence that there is. I'll tell you, Winifred, I've always been listenin' and lookin'. I have never been a part of anything or really in it."

"There you go, Skeet, saying listenin' and lookin'; you mustn't drop your g's. Promise me, Skeet." "I promise."

"Well," said Winifred, "there is a cheap scepticism around here, Miss Holcomb has been teaching it. She's infected Will Morley with it; Virgil Reese already has it. But you'll know Dr. Starrett, and then you'll know what it is to see deeply into things, and to feel that there is a Power moving through all things, as Wordsworth so beautifully sings it in 'Tintern Abbey.' Remind me, I want to read you that poem."

"To-night?"

"Yes, as soon as we get home."

We didn't, however, read it until after supper; for Mrs. Hervey had saved food for us, and made us eat as soon as we arrived. And then Winifred got Wordsworth and read "Tintern Abbey." I sat spellbound, worshipping Winifred, worshipping the Power that could create her; grateful to Life that had brought her to me.

And I went home under the September moon filled with happiness and aspiration. For what did it all mean? The story of Zaccheus in the tree came to my mind. I had been seen by Winifred from her vantage point of vision and interest long before I had met her. She had been drawn to me enough to inquire about my life, what I had been, what I was doing. She had sent her father to employ my father in the Skip Morris case, and thus our poverty had been alle-

viated, and my happiness increased. And now she was my friend, opening up to me treasures of beauty and wisdom, and standing all the while near me with the hand of friendship while I enjoyed these new riches. And a new life had thus come to me. My heart was overflowing with ecstasy.

CHAPTER XII

I HAD left off loafing in the barber shop altogether. I spent what evenings I could spare with Winifred, and she told me many things about books. She would say, "You do not need to read this story. I'll tell you what it is." In that way I gained time. But Max Müller and Addison, and Macaulay, and books of poetry she made me read. I had sent away and bought a Shakespeare; my grandmother presented me with Oliver Goldsmith, and I had bought a Poe at the bookstore in Marshalltown, and a second-hand set of Plutarch. I had found a place where I could send for books at trifling cost; odd things like Marcus Aurelius, Seneca; and I bought whatever struck my fancy in the name, picking up a translation of Theocritus in this way. Winifred knew the Iliad very well, could recite long passages of it, spoke of its characters as if they were living beings of her acquaintance. And she made me read Pope, and then Chapman, her favorite translation. Between all these readings and my studies at school, I was wholly occupied. I had grown strange, too, to my mother and Myrtle. As I said, they did not like Winifred; and I could see difficulties ahead.

The spring came. Winifred and I tramped the woods for wild flowers — often climbed Parnassus to look over the valleys growing green under the soft winds and the warm sun. And finally I was graduated with "Grinner," under the motto *Parata Ad Vitam* done in evergreens and silver letters on the proscenium. My oration was "Macaulay" and "Grinner's" "Civil Service Reform." Will Morley and Larry Wright were back from Ohio. They stood in the back of the hall, jaunty and smiling, as much as to say

that it was pretty good for me. Winifred was in the audience, though she rarely went anywhere. She had come to hear me; and to applaud with her eyes and her presence.

After this I felt like resting, like a runner who has finished his course. I felt that I must spend the spring with Winifred. Something of May was still left. But just then her aunt, Mrs. Huntley Moore of St. Louis, came to Marshalltown; and after a brief visit took Winifred back home with her. Mrs. Moore was beautiful and kindly. She took a lively interest in me, and seemed to marvel at my energy and power to achieve. "You were an idle boy until this year, Winifred says. "Yes," I answered. But I had not been idle except in the matter of books. Winifred said to me, "I really hate to go, Skeet. But it does me a world of good to get away. My aunt is so proud of me and does so much for me. I'm going to hear some concerts, and see some plays. And I'll be back in about a month; and you'll be here; and then we can go on." My heart fell, yet I said, "Yes, Winifred, and now that you are going away, I think I'll go too. I have saved a little money, and I think I'll go to the farm."

The next day after Winifred left I was off to the farm. I had taken no books with me; but in rummaging through a box in a chest of the farmhouse, as Mitch had done long ago, I found Moore's poems, and some novels by Scott; and I read. My uncle looked at me and went off hunting ducks, coming back with squirrels and rabbits, dressing them, and not telling me what he had bagged. I didn't know till grandma served the game at table. Uncle Henry said I was changed, and simply went his way alone.

I had brought my autograph album with me and grandpa inscribed these words in it:

"Life's responsibilities and duties are now upon you, and you may by integrity and diligence in your sphere achieve success. Be courageous and hopeful, and ever remember the most important duty of this life is to live for Him who died for all."

I was not quite eighteen, but somehow the declaration that life's duties and responsibilities were now upon me affected me as much as if I had been told that my eyes were blue, which they were. The time seemed so long now since I had been busy, and self-reliant, and doing for myself, that these words pointed to no new condition for me. As to the rest of the inscription, that I should live for Him who died for all, I couldn't see how I could do that; it meant nothing to me; and it meant as little to tell me that He had died for all. I was not irreverent toward the doctrine; it was simply without significance, or of as much significance and no more as the myths of Demeter and Dionysus of which Winifred had told me, and read about to me from the classical dictionary. Perhaps the first book I had read through was the Bible in order to earn five dollars promised me by grandma "as I tell about in 'MITCH MILLER'"; and I had a fair understanding of it, returning repeatedly to read the Gospels and Ecclesiastes.

On this visit grandma told me that when I was a year old I was first brought to her, and that I smiled for the first time, being a solemn baby before that. And that my mother had accused her of weaning me away. Now I was nearly eighteen, and I felt myself absorbed in other interests than the farm and the life here with grandma. I was thinking of Winifred; and the life that she had opened up to me constantly called me. My life on the farm had exhausted its charm.

I had had murder in my heart when I fought Pat Degan; and now on this visit I experienced the feeling again. My uncle seeing that I was not of the old life in which he knew me, and that I preferred to read rather than to hunt, or even to camp at Blue Lake, as in the old days, began to taunt me and treat me with indignity, flipping grains of corn in my face when I was reading, knocking my hat off, or pulling the chair from me so that I fell. In truth was not his psychology of envy much if not the same as Pat Degan's? One day when he was at these torturing practices, I struck

him, and he struck back, and followed me from the porch to the yard striking me harder and harder, though I was not returning his blows with any force. He was much stronger than I, and nine years older. But I grew bolder as I became more enraged; and presently I picked up a neck yoke from the ground, felling him into insensibility. I had cut his head. The blood gushed, and I was shaken with terror. Grandma came out screaming and croaking and saying, "Oh what a shame — what a shame to play so rough and then get angry and commit murder!" He came to himself after a few minutes; but we had to lift him in and into a bed. And in a minute my visit was spoiled and all its joy departed. I made ready to go at once; for grandma said, "I can't have you together." I had only been here ten days; and now I was to return to Marshalltown to pick up life as best I could, with Winifred gone, and my school over; with "Grinner" working for his father all day long; with Brose Horne off traveling with a seller of liniment for whom he was playing the banjo. Yet there was Suevie Ross! He was now swinging in the hammock and still meditating his great tragedy of "Clytemnestra." So in these conditions I returned to Marshalltown. Grandma said good-by to me sadly; grandpa was grave and silent. Here was another change in my life. The telescope was revealing objects about me with greater clearness. Indeed was this first section wholly drawn out at first? Was it not now being extended a little farther; and was I not seeing with a better adjusted lens? The farm was not what it was to me. My paper knight which grandma kept in the bureau drawer was not real, only a paper knight. I was beginning a new phase. Had Winifred drawn out the telescope?

CHAPTER XIII

I HAD described to Winifred my sensations of loneliness and pain at partings of all kind, and at all cessations of old things. She had told me the feeling was one of nostalgia. So I use the word here. When I returned to Marshalltown I was in a deep nostalgia. But for what I could hardly say. The quaint tunes that grandma had played on her music box kept running through my head. And at sunset instead of seeing the sun as it looked over the hills to the west of Marshalltown, I visualized it in fancy as I knew it shone over the prairies around the farm.

Myrtle was very gay with her beaux, dandified young fellows from the towns around, and did not sympathize with me in the feelings I had in coming home. She looked at me and said: "Why did you come home so soon? Winifred is not here. She's not coming back all summer." "How do you know?" I asked finally. "Some one told me the other evening, I've forgotten who." Just then mother came in. "Well, you're back," she said rather joyously, but in a tone of triumph. "At last have you got enough of that old farm? Have you at last?" With this reception I could not tell what had broken my visit. I lied a little to hide my feelings: "I'm going to work on *The Intelligencer*; the editor sent for me." I knew I could go to work there, so I ventured the untruth. And mother said, "You'd better go in the office and help your father. Why not read something useful — read law?" A thrill went through me! I thought of Mitch who said so many times, "I'm caught in this here law." And with this remark of my mother's I saw a gleam of the hook that was dangling in my troubled waters. But no law for me yet! My first thought was to see Suevie Ross and borrow Locke, "On The

Understanding"; for Poe's stories of mystery had whetted my metaphysical interests; and I determined to try them out. My next thought was to see Editor Chapin and place myself with him in a growing position.

Just then my father came in. He had a letter for me. It was from Winifred. I was sharply eyed by all three, but I said nothing; did not open it in their presence. I went to my room and read:

"Dear Skeet: You must forgive me, but I don't remember whether your grandfather gets mail at Atterberry or Petersburg. I have heard you mention both places; and in this plight I am sending you this letter to Marshalltown in the hope that your stern parent will forward it to you. I must tell you how happy I have been here. I have seen again my blue-eyed friend Genevieve, — to quote Coleridge my blushing Genevieve — who is so pretty and talented. She is painting now and wishes me to take it up again. But I know quite well that my talent is just a little thing; and I so much prefer to read, and hear music, and see plays, and talk to people who are fond enough to imagine that I can pontificate. And moreover I love to scribble, as you know. So the days go by with all these charming things; and I find so many people here in this dear old city. I wish you could know Bob Hayden, a writer and editor, an almost famous man about thirty-five. He called on me, and we engaged in a mad controversy over Wagner; and over Walter Pater. All the while my aunt is kindness itself, manifesting such pride in me, and looking after my comfort, also my health; and I have been ill some — but do not worry. So much for myself: and now as to you I hope you are happy, and getting a change from your really arduous studies and readings. I am dreadfully proud of you; and when I get back I shall have fresh ideas and inspirations for you, and perhaps we can take some walks again. Mrs. Turner has written me; and to be explicit I think I'll be back in about three weeks. I send you so

much friendship, and ask Heaven to bless you in all your work and hopes.

“Winifred.

“P.S. We must go — you and I — to see Dr. and Mrs. Starrett at Marietta. Could you manage to be away about two weeks? For the time flies there. We have so many happy evenings and such heavenly days riding around the country.”

I put the letter in my pocket with the feeling that I had found a human being with whom I could commune; who was wholly interested in me. Whatever Winifred felt of romance she did not forefront it in this letter! but what kindness and gentleness and friendship were here! I felt sustained, uplifted; my loneliness left me; wherever Winifred was in the world, so long as I could hear from her, I could feel that my strivings were noted and encouraged. And that evening I wrote Winifred this letter:

“Dear Winifred: I came back from the farm just in time to get your letter; and so it did not have to be forwarded. I’ll tell you when you get back why my visit ended suddenly, and pretty bad for me and everyone. So to-morrow I’m going to see Rev. Chapin and ask him to take me on *The Intelligencer* for good; and now that you are not here to lend me Sir William Hamilton out of your father’s library (and I don’t like to ask your father) I’m going to see Suevie Ross and borrow John Locke and tackle it hard. I will be overjoyed to see you; and you know that after press day (Thursday) I always have the rest of the week; and for that matter time enough any day, if I don’t have to help out in setting type. So we can take walks; and I’m keen about going to Doctor Starrett. You think of so many lovely things for me, and I can hardly bear to have you away; so do come back as soon as you can.

“Skeet.

“P.S. You notice I don’t drop my g’s when I write.”

The next morning I went to see Rev. Chapin about taking me into a permanent place upon *The Intelligencer*. He had published my oration on "Macaulay" and it had made something of a stir in Marshalltown. What I wanted to do was to help edit the paper. I had learned the printer's trade now, all but the fancy part of it, such as setting up featured matter, with different styles of type; and I did not wish to go further with it. Rev. Chapin said, however that he could give me a place if I would help the boys set type when they were pressed; and though I could see that this inferior position would prove embarrassing I had to consent. I had to do something; and that part of the work which was editing pleased me so much that I felt compelled to make sacrifices for it. So I went to work at once. But it was Friday; the paper was off. There was job work to be done; and the type had to be distributed. Grant Farris, the foreman, could not help at this; he was doing the job work. And just as I was setting myself to a page of writing Grant came in and says: "You've got to help out here. I've got bills and letterheads to do; and some table work. John can't distribute all the forms. You can do that writin' any time; or the editor can do it. It's his work anyway; so you've got to come out here and help." More clods in my modeling clay! I looked at John prepared to refuse if possible, but just then Rev. Chapin came in. And Grant said: "If Skeet can help out on the distributin' I can get this job work done; otherwise we'll be late with the paper next week." Rev. Chapin said: "Better help 'em, Skeet."

So I descended from the editorship to the type case. And then I found myself, as I have found myself so much, in a superior position but reverting to inferior tasks; drawn down to the level of those about me, and envied by them when I escaped into the higher work that was also mine. I had looked up Suevie Ross and borrowed books. He read me the choruses he had written for his "Clytemnestra"; and they seemed wonderful for their unlikeness to anything

I knew in life, and their far-off literary quality, as if out of a book that had always existed. He was lying in the hammock reading Greek; and lounging through the summer, waiting for the fall to go back to Montreal. So I began to read Locke and to make copious extracts from it in a commonplace book. I wanted to show Winifred how much of it I had mastered when she returned.

The next week I was sitting in the editor's office, my feet on the table buried in books, when Grant Farris rushed in bawling for copy, and saying that if I was going to edit the paper I had to furnish the copy for them to put in type. It reminded me for the moment of Mitch's experience on the *Observer*. But it happened that I had written almost enough to keep the boys going all day, and had turned to Locke with a sense of leisure. I coolly handed the copy to Grant, who took it with a grunt of surprise and chagrin; for he thought he had caught me reading, and behind with my work. But at the last minute on press day, I had to desert my chair and go into the composing room to help with the final hasty details of making up the paper, so that it would be printed on time. Thus I oscillated between these two positions, ascending and descending the levels between the editorship and a sort of devilship.

Will Morley was back, but he kept to his house and yard in a sort of gloomy grandeur. I was too proud to look him up; and he was not at all excited about my work as editor of *The Intelligencer*. I saw him a few times on the street, dressed in a derby hat, a flowing tie, looking distinguished, and more like Lord Byron than ever. I had heard whisperings. A little later he drew toward me, on an occasion when I met him near his home. He warmed a little. Then we took a walk and he said that he was reviled on all hands in this village community; that he was misunderstood; and that he planned to go to Italy where a man could live a free life, and develop his soul.

Winifred did not return for about a month. I knew of the day from her father, and made an item of it for *The*

Intelligencer. Then I went to see her. She looked stronger, her color was brighter. She was gayer, if possible. But above all she was my friend, and manifested it in every way. I brought my commonplace book to show her what I had done with Locke. "Skeet, this is wonderful," she said, "and a good discipline for you. But isn't Locke a sort of metro-nome, a tick-tack logician? I haven't read him much. It's my opinion that you don't need anything to improve your analytics; but something to keep vital and flaming your intuitional powers. Here's Hamilton if you want it. I've read some of it, and I believe you'll like it." So as I had about finished Locke, I took Hamilton and began it, running the two books parallel for a time. We began the walks again to Parnassus and Arcadia. Somehow I was watched, or interdicted, in these strolls. I had to go when I had plenty of copy accumulated for the boys; sometimes to the neglect of the work in the composing room, work that I was only expected to do secondarily. But I took the chance; for Rev. Chapin gave me license, and I only had the boys to contend with over absences. That was disagreeable enough, for that matter. Yet I didn't mind it so much as I did the looks of my mother and Myrtle and an occasional word of reproof from my father.

In early September he went away to visit Aunt Melissa in Ohio. And now the time seemed opportune for Winifred and me to go to Dr. Starrett's for our visit, of which we talked so much. Dr. Starrett drove us out one Saturday. I had piled up copy for the paper. I asked Rev. Chapin for a leave of a week or ten days, planning to send notes about the country and Marietta, and something from Dr. Starrett on a scientific subject. He consented to my absence and Winifred and I drove with Dr. Starrett out of town, and through the hills to Marietta.

CHAPTER XIV

DR. STARRETT was the president of the Scientific Association and he urged Winifred and me to join. We signed the application on this visit. His house was one of many rooms, old and quaint, standing near the river, not far from the enclosed bridge. We had a boat to paddle about in, and there were nights of a young moon. During the day we rode with Dr. Starrett while he paid his professional calls. These were long drawn-out excursions, for Dr. Starrett was in and out of the carriage catching butterflies and moths, and picking floral types newly discovered to him. He had two rooms devoted to collections: one of shells which he had classified and arranged in cases, also of fish and serpents in bottles; and another room containing butterflies, beetles, insects of various sorts, and botanical specimens.

One evening he gave us a wonderful talk upon butterflies and moths, bringing forth the jessamine sphinx, swallow-tails, the death's-head moth, cabbage white butterflies, the flour moth, and others; and telling us of the stages of their development from the egg, through the caterpillar forms to wings and flights among the flowers and scented growths. He had a box of pearls gathered from the shells, delicate with fires of purple, blue, roseate; and he explained to us the process through which the pearl comes: A grit falls upon the sensitive plasm of the mollusca; it endeavors to soften the sharpness of the grit, and overcome the irritation; and it is cured in the making of the pearl. Winifred's eyes were flaming, for she saw applications of these truths to the interpretations of life. But while I saw them, too, they did

not extend far enough; they did not clinch. They left regions unguessed, just as the events of this period of my life cast shadows that meant nothing since I did not understand the events themselves. For what are symbols but miniature dramas or figures of the larger reality lived through and understood?

I saw myself now as a being cast upon its own resources. If I was a winged creature, I had not grown wings; and the food prepared for my crawling life was giving out. I was cut loose from the life out of which I was born. I was looping my caterpillar self along far extended twigs; and yet I felt the urge to go on, to be and to carry out the scheme of life, and perform the part assigned to me. It was a biological impulse seen as a societal, or individual romance and program.

Winifred and I were taking walks over the hills, always with a book; and I began to think definitely of making a place and a home for myself. The farm was a dead thing—I could not live there again. My own home? What was I but a boarder there? A great loneliness came over me. Had not circumstances spilled me out of the world, even as the young birds are cast upon their own strength almost in the day when the mother is still bringing them food? And it seemed to me if I could marry Winifred, and get a home, I should be happy. I was well able to take care of her; I was making enough for myself and by greater application I could make enough for both of us.

We were sitting under a tree on a high hill looking at the river below us. I began to tell Winifred my feelings; how I felt exactly as if I were in the worm state, but ready to grow wings; how I felt quite alone, and how I seemed driven to make a place for myself and carry out my individual existence and perform my part in doing so in the scheme of life. "You know, Winifred," I said, "how much I care for you. I think you are the second human being, outside of my own family, that I have ever been attached to. The first was Mitch; but we were little boys. And you are the

second. A woman, older in living than I, yet my own age in years. And you have been so good to me — always so thoughtful and tender and devoted. You have quite won me and ——”

I was going on into a declaration of love, a proposal of marriage. Winifred interrupted me saying: “Skeet — oh Skeet — the earth yawns beneath us. Oh, my friend, my friend, please — what can I say to you?”

I looked at Winifred. The tears were streaming down her cheeks. She was twisting her hands together in a kind of agony. It was a moment of intense reality. Yet I had heard so much of woman’s natural coyness, how she must be won; even Dr. Starrett had talked to us of flight and pursuit among the animals; how the female allures and flies, and the male is drawn and follows. Here we had been friends all this time; and what stood in the way of our marriage? I studied Winifred’s face. She was in an agonized dumbness, looking intently into space, her face pale, the tears coursing down her cheeks, her hands clutched tight. And quite suddenly she reeled, and fell into unconsciousness at my side. I leaned over her. I spoke to her: “Winifred! Winifred!” I rubbed her forehead; her hands; a crackling froth came forth between her beautiful lips. I rubbed it away. Her face became livid. Her eyes were rolled back into her head. And thus she remained for several minutes. She came to herself then. I helped her into a sitting posture. “How are you, dear?” She was silent, confused, gradually gathering herself together. Then quickly she regained possession of herself. And after a minute she said: “Promise me, Skeet, that you will never talk that way to me again?” “Why?” “Oh, you mustn’t.”

I had heard Winifred talk of a Dr. Giles who lived in St. Louis. Was she betrothed to him? Had she given her word, did she now wish to withdraw it to give her word to me? What was the explanation? And in the blindness of these conjectures I should have pursued the quest, except I did not wish to see Winifred swoon again; and might she

not do so? "Oh! I fainted quite away," she said, "didn't I?" "Yes, but why? I can't make out." "Well, Skeet, sometime I may tell you why — not now. Come, I am strong again; let's go back to the house."

We rowed on the river that night — all of us; Mrs. Starrett joined us too. The moon was full, throwing its light over the dark forest, making a sort of confused distinctness of the bare hills above us. We sang and talked. And planned a big ride for to-morrow far up the river where Dr. Starrett was going for shells. But the next morning came, and I was called on the telephone. It was my father. I had to return at once to Marshalltown. I hired a buggy and started, leaving Winifred to take the excursion with Dr. Starrett and Mrs. Starrett. I left in a great disappointment and with many anxieties about Winifred. I left with a deep longing in my heart.

When I got to Marshalltown I went at once to my father's office to learn what message was in store for me. I could not imagine. Father looked at me with large eyes, half of disapproval. Then he said: "You act as if you had unlimited time. How does Chapin happen to let you off this way?" I explained that I was keeping up my work, that I had planned to go anyway. "Well," said my father, "this work is just foolishness. It comes to nothing; and I want you to stop it. At least as a regular thing, and with any idea of following it in life. I've just come back from seeing your Aunt Melissa, and she urges me to educate you. A man named Haddon Brown has come to town and opened up the old college building as a preparatory school. He commences right away; and I want you to go there and prepare for college. Quit this general reading, quit it; and take hold of your studies and get ready. You are going on 19 and you have no time to waste. 'Grinner' is going to go. The church is going to finance him; and if you will help yourself some, — I'll do the rest."

"What shall I do?"

"Well, since you don't know anything else, you can work

for Chapin. But I want you to be a lawyer; and if you will come in here and help me, I'll pay you. You can learn practical things about an office. Odd jobs will turn up for clients that you can do. For that matter you can make more here than with Chapin; and I'd rather you did it. But anyway quit this rambling about with Winifred. You can't marry her; and it has gone far enough."

I was thrilled with the idea of going to college; but I turned my face from the office and the prospect of becoming a lawyer. I thought of Mitch again, and of his remark about "bein' tangled in this here law." I made up my mind I never would be. Now as to Winifred, I could not give her up. She was the only solace I had; my one companion. I could not give her up. I determined that no matter what would come that I would see Winifred as before; that we would walk together, read together, and in the end I would win her for my wife. I said to my father: "This is a good chance and I am glad. I will do my best. I have a little money saved. I can work for Chapin on odd days and I will. When can I go to college?" "Next year — if you'll buckle down now, and quit all these distractions — Winifred, this miscellaneous reading, this scribbling under the name of Willis Aronkeil, or otherwise. Just set your mind and go ahead. You have brains enough. But you must concentrate."

I listened to my father and walked to the street. "Grinner" came along in overalls and gloves. I told him what my father had said. "Yes, I'm going. I start next week."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"You've been away. Besides I've just decided it. Say, we'll study together as before."

Then I went home to find Myrtle and mother just driving off in the phaeton. They said, "Well, how's Marietta? How's Winifred?" Before I could answer the horse had started and they were off. I entered the deserted house; for even Davis was off at play. And I was more lonely than I had words to express!

CHAPTER XV

HADDON BROWN was an Englishman, an Oxford man, strolling about in America on the reputation of those magical things. He was sixty or more, bald, the iris of his eyes was edged with white, he was wheezy, short of breath, smoked a meerschaum. He was incapable of energy, or ambition; he was looking for an easy place, and for money easily earned. "Grinner" and I started, taking Latin and logic and mathematics. And I was reading Sir William Hamilton in supplement. That winter Winifred started me in the Iliad and the Odyssey; also in Sophocles. And with these things and my work for Rev. Chapin, with voluminous notes to transcribe in my commonplace book I had full days and nights.

But the year had not advanced far when I could see that I would not have enough Latin to enter college. I could not get through the grammar and Caesar. "Grinner" could about make it; for he had taken Latin at high school, during our last year. I had to piece up so many things in order to get through that I could not take Latin. Thus it was I found clods in my clay; I found my bust leaning, in spite of all the framework I had put in it.

There was a certain secrecy now about my association with Winifred. Her friendship was not waste but a gain. The time spent with her was all profitable. But I could not advance this argument to my father, who had exacted from me the promise that I would buckle down to school. Hence it was also that the Iliad, the Odyssey, Sophocles and Hamilton were read in secret. There was a lock to the drawer in my study table, and I kept my secret books there. I read

far into the night in Hamilton or Homer as it happened, after my lessons at school were prepared.

Nevertheless I could stroll down to Winifred's on Saturday afternoons, sometimes in the evening. We could walk occasionally, too. I did not tell Winifred of the conditions that had been laid upon me. I only endeavored to see as much of her as possible; and to leave my failure to see her to be charged to my occupations and labors.

The Scientific Association was about to have a meeting in March. Dr. Starrett had written me asking me to go on the program, and I had gone to Winifred with the idea. "Look, Skeet! Why don't you write a paper on clairvoyance? You've been reading a lot on metaphysical things, beginning with Poe, and all through Locke and Hamilton — and following up all these modern investigations and experiments. Why don't you?"

I was attracted by the idea and set to work putting my material together out of my commonplace book, and my diary where I had been entering original speculations.

The time came at last; my paper was done. Mr. and Mrs. Hervey had a dinner before the meeting, entertaining Dr. and Mrs. Starrett, Virgil Reese and myself. Winifred entered upon a discourse on the Elizabethan dramatists, and became more and more brilliant as she drank cup after cup of coffee. She dazed me with her learning and her vocabulary. Surely I was a piece of clay beside her! And my poor paper on clairvoyance seemed like a lumbering and uninspired performance.

Virgil Reese first read an essay on "Buddhism" and then I followed. There was a large audience. For had I not won the prize with my essay on "Good Manners"? Was I not the boy editor of *The Intelligencer*? There was not much of original material in my paper; but I had gathered a great deal of philosophy and comment from books and articles. I had cemented these with some speculations of my own, and put it all together in a certain order. Winifred sat looking at me with admiring eyes. And when I had finished

Dr. Starrett opened the meeting for discussion; and various persons took a hand. Tecumseh Lindsay among the rest, who sputtered and orated, made humorous allusions and observations, to the delight of all. And then the meeting adjourned; and I was congratulated. Winifred came to me and said: "Skeet, your paper was splendid. And you were quite at yourself. You haven't been taking lessons of Miss Holcomb, have you?" "No!" "Well, if you would just watch a little and not let your voice fall so low, as it does sometimes, you would be altogether splendid. Still I want you to leave off philosophy; for you can believe it or not, that is not your forte; you belong to the realm of Homer and the dreamers. I know it, and you will find it out."

Just then Virgil Reese came to me to congratulate me. And he said: "I'm going to give you Spencer's 'Data of Ethics' and 'First Principles' — for you're the kind who would like them."

"Now," said Winifred, "here you come with your old philosophy just as I am telling Skeet what he is fitted for. Won't you please leave him alone?"

I went home with the feeling that I had accomplished something. I felt strengthened and lifted up. Surely Winifred was my good angel. Neither my father nor my mother nor Myrtle came to the meeting. They took no interest in it, nor in my part in it. I was leading a double life. I was living at home where my heart was not; and I was off in other places and forums where they did not come, or wish to come.

And the year went by. I crowded Spencer into my studies; with the help of "Grinner" I went forward with Latin; with my help he advanced in logic. And at last it was nearly June. Old Haddon Brown had not made a success of the school. He didn't have a dozen pupils in all. He came to my father's office one day for his money and said, "I can't do anything here, I have an offer in New York, and I am going." He said good-by to me, then turned to my father: "Give him all the chance you can. He's a

strange mixture, half and half; half up here, away ahead there. He needs a chance to bring all the strands of himself up to even ends. And he'll do it in time. Give him a chance." He took my hand, and departed.

And then my father said: "You must come in the office now, and I'll tell you why. I have a big land case going to the Supreme Court. Here's the record and it must be abstracted. I'll need you here. There's five hundred pages of it. It will take you three weeks or so. But there's a hundred dollars pay. And you can have the money for your college year. You can't make \$100 with Chapin all summer. Besides you can learn how an office runs. You used to keep office for me in Petersburg. You've always been around court; and it's your game in life — not this other thing. Take off your coat now and go to work." And I did. I wrote till my arm ached. Then I would read and rest my arm; reading Spencer inside the cover of a law book, so that my father could not catch me, when he entered suddenly. In the evenings I saw Winifred. On Saturday afternoons we walked to Big Creek, to Parnassus. Often we returned in the dark, coming up the unfrequented streets that led from the country to her house. Once we were seen as we came home by Tecumseh Lindsay; once by Doug Thomas; at another time by Myrtle, who was walking with a beau, and ran into us quite suddenly. But what could anyone say? I was doing my whole duty at the office. And with Winifred I found delight, I found inspiration and help!

CHAPTER XVI

"GRINNER" was working for his father. He was going to Suevie Ross twice a week for help in Latin; for Suevie was back and again at work upon "Clytemnestra," which Mr. Ross said would surpass Sophocles when it was finished. I tried to join Suevie and "Grinner" in their Latin lessons, and did so a few times. But I had so much on hand with the office, I was so much more interested in Spencer, and the books that Winifred loaned me, that I could not add to these things the bi-weekly visit to Suevie's academy under the oak trees. Besides I was beginning to feel a slight fatigue. I could not get enough sleep. I began to be wakeful, to toss, and when I tried to arise in the morning, I scarcely had the strength to do so. One day at about the noon hour I was looking out of the office window, watching the village hurry, the hustle about the streets, the coming and going of people at this break in the day. Men were going into and coming out of the clerk's office; in and out of the bank; farmers were driving loads through the streets. "Grinner" went by with a delivery wagon. The horse dragged its feet, "Grinner" lounged in the wagon, futile and indifferent. The whole thing became a pitiable panorama of insignificance. It fell over me and around me like a gas which stifles and blinds and sickens. A nausea seized me. The whole of life became a nothing, a great disgust.

I went home to dinner, but could not eat. I lay down exhausted, but could not sleep. My breath came in little fits and starts as if my heart had weakened. I tried to get up, but it was with difficulty that I did so. My hearing had become strange. Voices and sounds came to me as if I had stopped my ears with my fingers. My own feet struck the floor as if they were the feet of another person; and I

heard voices call as in a dream. I could not put words spoken to me into sentences. When I read, my mind took the page like a dream. There was no rendition of the mind by the intellect. I reeled when I walked. My head swam. Terror took hold of me. I was afraid to go into the street lest I should be struck. I was afraid of rooms lest the walls should close together, or the ceiling fall. I went to see Winifred. She began to read to me. I was looking out of her window. The waving grass seemed to beckon mysteriously, to speak of far-off things, of delights that had passed; of days gone, never to return. I broke into tears, into uncontrolled sobs.

Winifred flew to me, kneeling by me. "Skeet — my dear, my dear, what is the matter?"

I could hear Winifred's voice far off, as in a cistern, a cave, or in a nightmare. Her face was strange to me too. My mind was caged. It knew its own prison and weakness; but it could not speak. And that is madness; or it is tragedy in those souls who have found sorrow or defeat and cannot tell them to the world; or it is the sickness of the mind when it faints under its load and its labors. "Skeet," said Winifred again, "are you weeping for me? — for — oh you mustn't — you will kill me! I cannot live — for oh I love you so — I love you as much as you do me — yet my dear, you must not break like this."

Somehow I rallied — and gathering the remnant of my strength I said: "Winifred — it is not you — not you — no — I am falling into some disease — I don't know — just help me to the door, and I believe I can get home."

"No," said Winifred, "lie here awhile — I will bring you a glass of wine. Lie here till you are stronger."

She went for the wine, returned, and I drank it. I seemed to be myself for a few minutes. I arose and said, "I'll be all right now. I'll go home. I'll be back as soon as I can."

With that I staggered down the walk, into the street, and reached my house. I undressed and went to bed, but only to toss in terror.

CHAPTER XVII

DR. HANSON came the next day to see me. And he said : "No college for you this year. You must get out in the air. You must recreate, work with your hands. Perhaps in a year you can go to college." I heard him ; but I was not disappointed. I did not have strength enough, interest enough to care. If he had said, "You will be dead to-morrow," I should have heard it with unconcern. He told my father that I had been racing my mind with studies until I was all but prostrated, and that I must not be allowed a book of any sort ; that I must build up my body. They conferred upon me. The result was this plan : I was to start out and drive over the country, stay in the open air, get back the ability to sleep.

My father had been given a horse and wagon as a fee. The horse was tall, an enormous creature. He was blind, but he stepped as if there were magical weights to his feet which launched them forth into huge strides of perpetual motion.

The harness was a ruin of old leather and ropes. The wagon a dirty unpainted vehicle that rattled its loose tires, its broken floor, its weakened springs in a way to frighten all beholders. My father said : "Take Rosinante," — I had nicknamed the horse so, — "and go out and collect bills for us. I'll pay you ten per cent. You can lay up at the farmhouses ; at hotels in the little villages. You can see Dr. Starrett along the way, for there are bills to collect at Marietta. You can get well this way. You must take yourself in hand or you'll die."

But the idea of going alone ! I couldn't. So I went to

"Grinner." He was delighted with the idea of going. He went to his father and got off. And the next morning we started. "Rosinante" at the click of my tongue plunged his long front legs into space. The wagon rattled. The dirt rolled about us. And I broke into a laugh. "Grinner" set up a howl. Myrtle and mother at the door waved farewell to us. And in a few minutes we were swaying, darting sideways, racing ahead on a country road. I had written a note to Winifred telling her of the project I had been forced into, and that I would be back soon, I was sure.

That evening we arrived at a log house of a man named Oscar Herbert whom my father had defended for murder. He had been sentenced to one year in prison, had served it, and was out again and at work on his farm. He seemed in a mood half grateful to my father for saving him from death, or a longer penalty; half resentful that he had been convicted at all. He went on to tell us that the man he killed had often threatened his life, and that while they were both in drink when the quarrel arose, the drink had nothing to do with it, or the murder which followed. And he wondered about the courts which could assess the saloon keepers in damages for the death of this man, to whom, as it was proven, only one drink had been sold by this saloon keeper; and whose act in selling the drink could not have brought about the man's death. "It don't link up," says Herbert. "The law says the man must die in consequence of intoxication to make the saloon keeper liable — and here he died in consequence of picking a quarrel with me and trying to have it out with me, as he had threatened a hundred times. But Lord! The people around here with that crazy Joe Samuels runnin' a prohibition paper don't think of nothin' but fightin' saloons and drink. They're cross-eyed and crazy."

I remembered the case now, and how my father had fought valiantly against the church and the odds that the prohibitionists put against him in Marshalltown, in his defense. Surely he had had a tough struggle in Marshalltown; and

no wonder he was self-absorbed and not wholly understanding of me and of my ways and aspirations.

We stayed at Herbert's that night. I slept very badly; and could not relish the rough food. The next morning Herbert brought forth \$20.00 from hiding to apply upon the \$200 he owed my father, saying he would pay more in the fall when he marketed his crop. We hitched "Rosinante" to the decrepit chariot and started off for Marietta, where I had three different debtors to dun.

Here I collected a little more, as I saw two of my men before noon. Then with a loud whoa we paused at Dr. Starrett's house; and he came forth in surprise, bursting into a guffaw when he saw "Rosinante." "What boneyard surrendered him from the grave?" asked Dr. Starrett. "Yes," said I, "but watch him step." I clicked my tongue and "Rosinante" hurled his feet into space, giving the wagon a lurch that threw "Grinner" off the seat. Dr. Starrett laughed loud and long and called to Mrs. Starrett, "Come here, Sue! Here's a sight." Mrs. Starrett came to the door and she joined in the laugh. I told them what I was up to; we were invited in to dinner. Dr. Starrett's boy came up and stalled "Rosinante." And I told my story: how I had fallen into exhaustion, and had gone into this grotesque expedition to regain my strength. Dr. Starrett looked me over. Then he said: "Are you sure Eros has not hit you with one of his deadly arrows?" "No," I said, "not that." "Well, it's nothing to be ashamed of; we all get hit; some are hurt worse than others. Anyway let me look you over." He put me through various tests; he asked me many questions. Then he said, "Oh, you'll be all right." "How about going to college this fall?" "I shouldn't be surprised; you have the resiliency of youth; you're strong, you'll be all right. In the future don't go so fast. I could see that night you read your paper on clairvoyance that you were under a heavy load."

"Grinner" had never been in Marietta before. He was interested in Dr. Starrett's collection. We rowed on the

river, we went into the country a short distance with Dr. Starrett; and that night he took us to a dance. "It will do you good, Skeet," he said. At eight o'clock we came to a house at the edge of town. There were six or eight country couples; a girl who wore a bandette, who played the 'cello; a long-faced sallow young man who played the violin; a fat girl who played the organ. The music was vigorous, if nothing else. And "Grinner" and I tried the reels with two detached girls, both of whom were impatient with our ignorance of the steps and the calls. We fell somehow into the trap of taking these girls home. Dr. Starrett laughed at us and went his way, saying he would leave the door unlocked. He knew what it meant; that we had more than a mile to walk out, and more than that back to his house. It was already toward midnight. When we got to a cross-road, "Grinner's" girl said: "I go this way." So we separated, and I walked along with my girl, whose name was Cordelia. The night was balmy; the stars large and soft. After we had gone a quarter of a mile Cordelia said: "Let's sit here awhile." I was tired and I turned with her to the edge of the road and sat with her in the grass. She put her hand on my knee; she brushed my cheek with hers. At last she put her arms about me. She pretended to fall back. Yet she lay there, looking up, saying, "How bright the stars are!" Quite suddenly she took me with arms of wonderful strength and pulled me toward her. I said "Don't," for in a twinkling Winifred's face came before me. Cordelia jumped up quickly, pushing me away with powerful arms. "Fraidy cat!" she called, and began to run, vanishing in the darkness. I stood in the middle of the road, under the stars, in the profound stillness of the country, at midnight. Then I walked to Dr. Starrett's, arriving at nearly one. "Grinner" was already there. And we retired. And I slept — slept almost perfectly, and for the first night in many days.

The next morning we were on our way. "Rosinante" stepped off the miles like a fabulous steed out of the "Arabian Nights."

The busy farmers turned back to look and to smile as we rattled on through the dust that fogged about us. Among other places we had to make was the home of Nathaniel Graybeal. He was the man whose record I had abstracted for the Supreme Court; and my father had written him a letter to pay me. He was known to me, as I had seen him often in the office. I presented my letter to him and he smiled and said, "All right—how do you want it,—in greenbacks or in a check?" I said "greenbacks." "Now let me tell you," he said, "you're going into a rough country if you go back to Marshalltown by way of Fiatt, as you say, and you'd better not have too much money with you. Nobody can steal a check. It does 'em no good." This seemed wise; so I took a check; and as I had about \$200 in my pocket, I asked for a needle and thread, saying I wished to mend my coat. Instead I tucked the money in the lining and sewed it up. We stayed overnight with Mr. Graybeal; and the next morning took our way with "Rosinante," stepping forward with undiminished energy.

We came to Fiatt; and here I had to see the toughest debtor of all. The bill was an old one, had been running until it was nearly outlawed. The man was a Dr. Vorhees who had been in some mysterious trouble from which my father had extricated him. He received me with ill-concealed ill-humor. And when I asked him where I could stay for the night he said "the hotel." The hotel was merely the upper story of a grocery store, practically the only rooming house in this crude and ugly village of a dozen buildings or so. There was no place to put "Rosinante" and the wagon except in a yard back of the store. For supper we had to make out on cheese and crackers and a bit of bologna. Dr. Vorhees did not invite us to his house. That was the gratitude of my father's reclamation from the grip of the law.

I was much better now, could feel myself growing back into strength. And as uninviting as the bed was I undressed and got in, as "Grinner" did. The place was

ominous; I recalled what Mr. Graybeal had said; and in placing my coat and trousers away for the night, I began to think of one of Poe's stories, which treats of the psychology of hiding things; which is to leave them in plain view, or in open places, like shelves, or bookcases. With this idea I flung my coat and trousers on the chair, in a careless heap.

There was no lock on the door, so I leaned a chair under the knob and went to bed. I was not long in falling asleep, but I heard the heavy breathing of "Grinner" before I lost consciousness.

Sometime in the night I thought I heard the door close, or move. I sat up and stared about me. The chair was away from the door, which was half open. I had no watch, yet I got up and felt through my pocket for my check. I could not find it. And the next morning I looked again; it was gone. So were "Rosinante" and our wagon. And there we were fourteen miles from Marshalltown, ten miles from Dr. Starrett's, and no conveyance. My money was still safely sewed in my pocket, that much had been saved. We went to see a constable in the village and sent him forth to recover "Rosinante" and arrest the thief. I told Dr. Vorhees of my misfortune, and again asked him for the money he owed my father. He was gruff, said he would come to Marshalltown soon to see my father about it. As for "Rosinante" it couldn't be anything but a joke; for who would steal such a horse? I didn't know what to do about the check. It was the money I meant to use for college. And I was depressed. We decided to walk back to Mr. Graybeal's and tell him; which we did. He said, "I told you so; well, I'll call up the bank and stop payment." He did so; and then as he was going near Marietta he took us and we made another visit to Dr. Starrett, staying there a few days.

Thus three weeks went by; and I returned to Marshalltown well — at least Dr. Starrett said I was. And when I presented myself to Dr. Hanson, he nearly concurred, saying, "You're a wonder. I thought you were in for a severe

nervous trouble. But you're on the way; and if you're careful you can go to college after all."

I turned the money I had collected over to my father. The check was never presented for payment. Mr. Graybeal replaced it. But of "Rosinante" we never heard a word. If he had stepped on clouds of fire into Olympus his disappearance could not have been more complete. My father merely laughed. "He wasn't worth a cent," he said. "More than that he was a disgrace. And he served a good purpose in hauling you around and getting you well." I could see so many of my grandmother's traits in my father that in spite of everything, my deepest attachment was for him. His beauty and strength of mind gave me the greatest pride, filled me with intense admiration. His head and his brow were almost faultless, his eyes large and luminous, his features finely chiseled. And his amiable spirit, his physical powers were exhaustless; his humor wonderful. It rose above every meanness and treachery that surrounded him. It defied domestic disharmony; it carried him over almost insupportable defeats. He was a born liver. He loved people. He was an infinite visitor with quaint characters in the streets. He gathered up a treasury of stories and anecdotes of marvelous raciness and humor. And in his life at Marshalltown, he had allied himself with the liberals; those who worked to keep the race track; those who wanted well-kept saloons. He stood forth dauntless and unchanging in these adherences. And he fought back the church and the ascetics, the reformers, the Pharisees, the hypocrites, without ceasing and with a measure of success. On this little forum was repeated a life process and drama which have been staged over and over again in cities, kingdoms and nations. And it was only by degrees that I understood what was being enacted around me; and what the forces were which crippled him and filled our living at home with anxiety and embarrassment and at the beginning with want.

And now, as I came back from this trip around the country, my father looked at me so kindly that my whole being was

filled with admiration for him. His beauty of person and an awakening of understanding of his predicament and his difficulties filled me with devotion and loyalty. His courage, his energy, his forthrightness, his standing square to his idea of life, his engaging democracy, his quenchless hope, his soldierlike pugnacity, which never surrendered, won me completely even against the conviction that he did not sympathize with my aspirations; and even against the feeling that he had a hard side which was too often turned against me in my need. I said to "Grinner": "Isn't it funny that father isn't universally liked here, and honored? I don't understand it." And I didn't. I had not learned yet that the world is divided between the livers and the ascetics; the spenders and the savers; the warm hearts and the cold hearts; that these forces are in irreconcilable conflict everywhere, and that the conflict makes for the pain and the mystery of life.

CHAPTER XVIII

I WENT to the house. My mother said, "Well, Skeet, you look like yourself. You have lost the worried look you had. Now keep it lost. Don't get into the state of mind you were in before you went away." She went to her writing desk and opened a drawer. "I have half a mind not to give you this. Still you are pretty near a man — you must look out for yourself. I'll give it to you, though your father is half mad at you. Read this; here's a letter for you. Read it and then I want to talk to you." It was a letter from Winifred mailed two days before. A lump came in my throat; my heart gave a bound. Was Winifred writing me that she had changed, or was going away, or that I could see her no more? "All right, mother," I said. "I'll be back in a few minutes." I took the letter and went to my room and read:

"Dear Skeet: How odd it is for me to write you when we live in the same little town — and yet might I not do so if I had seen you yesterday? For there are always things I wish to say to you when you have gone. Only I have not seen you yesterday, nor for more than three weeks, and it seems a long while. And I have wondered about you; and if you were gaining, and were happy. I have sent so many messages to you in thought and have tried to shower your way with happy fancies and with daily blessings. Did they befall you? You must tell me when you come back. I am writing this letter in bed; and the reason why I write it is that I am tired of reading, even my adored Müller; and it seems quite the happiest thing to talk with you on paper, just as if you were here. I must tell you what a strange thing befell me last night. We had guests for supper and like the foolish virgin that I sometimes am, I drank cup after cup of coffee, having started out to expound to an inter-

ested group at table some of my theories about art and kindred things. Well, after they went, I ascended to my room and began to read a play by John Webster in my treasured collection of the Elizabethan dramatists. It was the 'Duchess of Malfy,' that terrible masterpiece of terror and pity. I was wrought up to a high pitch anyway; and at one of the most thrilling climaxes of the play something fluttered into the room, and began to beat its terrified wings against the wall and the ceiling. It was nothing but a poor wayward bird which out of the darkness had blown bewildered into the light of my reading lamp. But I had strange visions and imaginings of what it was — perhaps a soul — your soul, Skeet, as if you had died and had just come to me. In consequence I set up cries of terror; and my dear father, who is always so patient with my changing moods, came in and took me in his arms, and tried to allay my unreasoning fear. Then quite suddenly I swooned, as I did when we were together on the hill near Marietta; and when I came to I was in bed and even Dr. Hanson came; and here I have been kept. I am quite myself this afternoon; but I kept thinking of you; and at last both to while away the time, and to have the delight of sending these words to you, I have written them; and they will be sealed and posted, just as if you lived far away, and would have the novelty of hearing from me.

"And I must tell you, 'Willis Aronkeil,' that I have sold a poem to one of the magazines, for which I have received the munificent remuneration of \$15 and now we can have caramels to the top of our bent when we walk, or to munch when we read. You are going away to school soon, and we must walk a few times anyway. I have some books to give you; and will you allow me to present you with a folder for handkerchiefs, which I have made out of blue silk, and decorated as beautifully as I know how? I'll give it to you when I see you, which I hope will be soon. And may I look upon you quite restored and happy; for I wish you to have happiness in the thought that I am so deeply your friend.

"Winifred.

"P.S. My poor poem is only proof of the fact that even at my age I am doing as good as I ever shall, perhaps; while you are such an immeasurable distance yet from finding yourself. I say this in spite of the fact that you have never appeared discouraged to me; or in the slightest degree envious of any success that came to me."

This letter moved me deeply. I was in no mood to combat my mother. I sensed that she wished to talk to me about Winifred. I wanted to get out of the house; yet there seemed no way to avoid the interview. Accordingly, I went downstairs and sat down awaiting what she had to say.

"Skeet, are you in love with Winifred?" she asked.

"No, not in particular."

"Well, you are worried, you became sick from worry. And in your absence Winifred nearly died. Mr. Hervey told your father. They had the doctor — and something is wrong with her."

"What?"

"In love," said my mother, looking me through.

"No."

"Look at me!"

I did — straight in the face.

"You deny it. Well, what is the matter? Why should you get ill? Why should she?"

"I have studied too hard."

"Studied! That doesn't make people sick — not the kind of studying you have done. Had Winifred studied too hard too?"

"No, she's not well at times."

"Well, do you want to marry Winifred?"

"Of course I don't."

"Keep away from her then."

"Mother — please, — please don't say anything unkind of Winifred — you mustn't."

"Yes, but I will. And suppose you intend to marry Winifred, which God forbid, do you wish to marry? And

then do you wish to come to yourself and find that you have married a woman who has ——”

My mother stopped and looked at me.

“Has what?” I said, full now of hurt and anger.

“Well, suppose you find out. I have given you the clue. Go on. In the morning the sky is red and then they say it will storm. I have given you a sign, work it out for yourself.”

She went out of the room, leaving me bewildered and crushed. If there was so much talk how was I to see Winifred? Could I even go to her house? Perhaps Mr. Hervey did not want me to come in the circumstances. Amid these reflections I decided to look up Mrs. Turner and ask her to go with me. “Winifred has been ill, I have heard. Let’s go to see her.” Mrs. Turner either divined what was in my mind, or else she acceded on the mere suggestion. At any rate we went; and after a few minutes together Mrs. Turner went downstairs to see Mrs. Hervey and left me alone with Winifred.

The traces of suffering were on Winifred’s face. She was pale and worn. But her eyes beamed with delight. She read to me some marked passages from books she had been delving into. She asked me about my trip. She commented again upon the weird circumstance of the bird which had fluttered into her room. And then she said: “What’s on your mind, Skeet? Did you have a happy time? At least you look well.”

“I am quite myself again,” I said. “Only the time is approaching for my going away. I see that our old days are ending; and it makes me a little sad. I wish we could have some walks again.” I said this to evoke from Winifred some declaration about the gossip, if she knew of it. But Winifred merely answered: “I must be very quiet for a few days yet; and then we’ll see. If I can manage it we’ll walk, at least once again.”

Once again! Winifred must have heard of the ugly words going about Marshalltown, of which my mother had told

me. Still she said nothing more. She only added: "Come down whenever you choose. We can visit here. My mother wants you to come to dinner. I have your handkerchief sachet all ready, except for adding a ribbon; and I'll give that to you when you next come."

Winifred had tucked the check that she received for her poem under her pillow. She brought it forth and showed me. And I said: "Well, Winifred, you can do it — I can't. You have a gift and I haven't."

"Skeet," she said, "it's just as I wrote you — you haven't found yourself. You're like a house less than half built, one part bigger than the other; some windows in, others not; places for doors half finished; scantlings sticking up here and there; even the foundation not all in; a cellar still being dug. And I — my little cottage is done and painted. A vine is growing over it. It has flowers already; and these are the earliest flowers. And there is another thing. If you write you'll have difficulties; for the state of thought and taste is such in the country that what I write, coming from a feminine heart and about sweet and simple things, will find acceptance; while your turbulent and rebellious nature will burst forth into words that this sweetly smiling, ever hoping land will not wish to hear. Here's a book of essays by Leopardi that I've been digging into. He says here in effect that the world does not hate the evil that a writer portrays, but hates the writer for portraying the evil. It's true — and so true of America. And I can only say to you to keep your stout heart reënforced with the iron of resolution, and go on. You may suffer in causes that seem of no worth, but you will find that you must do what is in your nature to do, be the result what it will."

Then I said to Winifred: "You have done so much for me, you have given me so much inspiration, eyes and ears, and a new life all in all — tell me, have I been of any worth to you — have I given you anything?"

"Why, of course, Skeet; don't you see I have been here in this house, immersed in my books? And then I hear of you,

about your essay, about your restless energy; and I want to meet you and don't know how. And then it comes about; and I find you such a human being, with such a capacity for friendship; and just because I can help you, you give me the inspiration to do it. I never tire of you. I love your mind, and your ways of thinking — and you have given me delight, all the time, with never a moment of shadow, or a feeling of distaste, or dislike for you in any way; or for anything that you have done, or think; and what a gift all this is! I have never been happy until I knew you. You have given me unbelievable happiness. Just think what that means! Dr. Giles, who still insists that I shall marry him, is interesting and a devoted friend, but, oh, he wearies me at times."

"Then you won't marry him?"

"Why, no, Skeet, never, you can be sure of that."

Mrs. Hervey came in, bringing Winifred some broth. Mrs. Turner said she had to go, looking at me, as if to ask me if I were going with her. And so I arose and left with Mrs. Turner, telling Winifred to get well — to get well quickly.

I walked up to the square with Mrs. Turner. As we were about to part on the corner, my father came along and stood with us, while Mrs. Turner said good-by and went her way. He looked at me quizzically for a moment and asked, "What are you doing this afternoon?" "Nothing," I said. Then with a gentle voice he added: "I thought you might be going for a walk." "No," I said. "Very well, come to the office after dinner; I've something I want to say to you."

I sensed a new turn in affairs. Had he changed his mind about sending me to college? Was Will Morley's Byronic experience to react upon me? Had Mr. Morley and my father conferred? Had Mr. Morley said: "No use to send a boy to school when he has a girl on his hands." Had my mother influenced my father? She disliked Winifred so terribly; and her mother as well. Thus I imagined a thousand things. But I went to the office and awaited the sentence.

CHAPTER XIX

My father was sitting at his table writing as I came in. For a moment he kept at it, leaving me to slip to a chair and sit down. He turned around then and looked at me. "Well," he said good naturedly, "Dr. Hanson thinks you can go to college if you don't carry too many studies. And it's a good thing that you can't. There's no sense in it anyway; a man can only do one thing well, and you can't learn everything there is in the world. And you ought to know that Byron and these fellows were geniuses and you're not. What I want you to do is to be a lawyer. You are now nineteen; you have had some office experience, you have always seen courts from the time you and Mitch Miller heard me try the Temple Scott case. Your general education is far beyond what mine ever was. In fact now I think you're better than a Yale graduate; and I'll tell you what I've made up my mind to. I'm not going to let you go to college."

My heart stopped beating. The tears came into my eyes. I said:

"Well, I've made up my mind to it — I ——"

"Yes, but that makes no difference."

"And I have more than \$100 of my own to pay my way."

"Yes, but that's not half enough for the year. And in your state of health, if you try to go on that, and make up the rest by work, you'll break down for sure. Now I tell you what I've decided. I have talked it over with your mother and she thinks it best. You can go to Champaign; I won't keep you out of that. But you must take the law course — drop Latin, Greek, drop all these literary studies; and buckle right down to the law. If this suits you, you can go. If not, you can stay here and work in the office."

I looked at my father, and a thousand thoughts whirled at once through my brain. Why did I have to be a lawyer? Why did I have to take up the study of it now? Why could I not indulge my present taste for classical studies? Why could I not prepare to be what I wanted to be? As he had disobeyed his father in becoming a lawyer, why could he not applaud me for choosing another way from the way he had taken? As he had left Petersburg to come to Marshalltown, even at the expense of his father's disfavor, why did he now offer me a program and penalize me if I refused it? But neither then nor until it was too late for me to derive good from it did I have any vision of what I could do independent of him, and in spite of him. Boys were working their way through school; taking post-graduate courses upon the fruit of their own efforts; seeing foreign lands after crossing on cattle boats. But I was blind to most of these things; some of them I did not even know about; and I was blind just as my father was blind when he moved to Marshalltown, and not to a better place, Chicago, or New York. The world is before all of us. It remains for us to see it. And every one fails in vision; the greatest overlook opportunities or mistake them. Even Napoleon mistook Moscow; and I sat there thinking dimly that perhaps I could work my own way. But how at first? I felt that I needed the start. And then it occurred to me that I could take the law course, and carry other studies too. Yes, that was it; and my father would be none the wiser. What had I to lose by acquiescing? Nothing. I would get away from Marshalltown. I would have a chance to look over new ground and try my strength. Who could tell what good fortune would come to me in Champaign? And so I said to my father: "I'd rather not study law now, but if you insist, all right."

"Very well," he said. "If you try to carry other studies, of course your reports will show, and more evident still your marks in the law course will show. And I'll know it; and you won't get to go back another year. We'll call this settled, however, and you can get some clothes later and be off when

the time comes. 'Grinner' and you can room together and so keep your expenses down."

Even "Grinner" was freer than I, in a more leisurely way of life. He was going to take the classical course. His father was going to help him straight through; and the church would contribute to "Grinner's" education, in the hope that he would become a minister. And I — well the church had no use for me. I had not attended it, though I had not fought it especially. I had used *The Intelligencer*, however, to oppose some of its favored policies in the town, and some of its pet politicians. I had done this to help my father, who was compelled to wage war on the church, and its ally, the bank; and now my father would help me, but only on condition that I followed his vision, not my own!

But if students had time for football, for societies, for girls, for other things, would I not have time for Greek, and for such books as I had never been able to procure in Marshalltown, after I had done my duty by the law? I felt this must be true. And to make the start I went to see Suevie, who gave me a month in Greek, of which I learned enough to read a little. I had made a good start under his tutorship before leaving for Champaign.

Winifred said to me: "Why, Skeet, it's not bad at all. As for that, Sir Walter Scott was a lawyer, so was Macaulay, so was Lord Byron; though don't you go imitating him, like Will Morley did. And it will be a fine discipline. Father says that Blackstone is a wonderful book both for the English and the history in it. Now do you make the best of it. And by cutting out the things that students waste so much time on, you can slip in some Greek, and all the reading that will be good for you. And you'll find that you are way ahead of the boys; you're better than a senior now in most respects; you're only behind in the languages — and as for that not one man in a thousand ever learns enough of Greek or Latin so that he can do better than grub out a text in worse language than an interlinear. Think of reading a chorus from 'Antigone' in such language. Well, take one of Plumtree's

renditions — and suppose you were sitting with Mr. Plumtree, and he was reading 'Antigone' to you orally, as he has rendered it by writing it out carefully, wouldn't you rather have that than your own painful piecing the words together, with a lexicon on your knee, and your mind trying to remember the first part of the sentence, when you have finally solved the last part of it? It's like running from place to place trying to keep a dozen things going, and forgetting the first things you started to do."

So Winifred gave me reflections to allay my disappointment. Then she took down her Greek testament and showed me how she could read it. "Let me have it," I said. With my knowledge of the English text and what I had picked up under Suevie I began to reel off the sentences. "Where did you learn this?" said Winifred. I told her; and she said: "Well, I'll tell you, Skeet, get a tutor over at Champaign and go on. Your father won't know it; and that is fudging that even he will approve of later."

The days slipped by; and now it was Tuesday and I was off Thursday. I had gone to see Winifred to return some books, to get my handkerchief sachet. It was done now, all the bows and ribbons on it, the roses painted on the back. It was a beautiful article, all made by Winifred's loving hands. Winifred gave it to me, stood looking up into my face, my hands clasped in hers to her breast. She said: "Skeet, you have become my dearest friend; and my greatest happiness is to give you happiness — hence this trifle, which will be useful to you, and a kind of souvenir of our happy days; and may I say something to you?"

"Yes."

"Well, take care of your health in every way, — your body; treat it like a valuable machine. There's a psychology in clothes — in a change of apparel. One gets a better feeling, a clearer mind sometimes by — well I should think having a hair cut — you know I am not criticizing you. Only you are going away — and it will be good for you if you keep your shoes polished, your nails always nicely manicured, your

linen well attended to — all such little things. That line of Thackeray I love: 'But if you fail or if you rise, be each, pray God, a gentleman.' You only need to think, not to be too frowsy and absent-minded over books; and you can be a gentleman from your heels to your head. It's in you. I am so proud of you, and so hopeful of you; and I want to see all your good traits, and all your fine talents come to flower. What day is this?"

"Tuesday."

"And you go Thursday?"

"Thursday at seven in the morning."

"And how about to-morrow, are you engaged?"

"No."

"That's splendid. Now I tell you — meet me at the foot of the hill, by Suevie Ross's gate at three, and we'll take a walk to Big Creek and to Parnassus."

"Winifred!"

"What?"

"We mustn't — it almost kills me to say so — but we mustn't."

"Why? — this talk, you mean?"

"Yes, do you know?"

"Yes, and at first it nearly made me ill — but now I don't care, — how dare I care, now that you are going away? Futures are always uncertain — quite uncertain for me, with the prospect of travel always before me, with my aunt, Mrs. Huntley Moore. For father says the next time she asks me to go abroad with her I can go. Anyway — why should we bow to this miserable gossip, these stirrers in filth, when you have always treated me as if I were an angel, and never misunderstood my frankness, or taken advantage of it? Why, it's absurd; and if I don't care — you mustn't — we'll walk, won't we?"

"Yes."

"Yes, and when you come back from school, we'll walk again. For Skeet, while I don't care to wear a red coat in a pasture of bulls, I'll wear the red coat, if I wish to, outside

the field. With this compromise made, I'm content to be clear with myself."

"Winifred, I'd never have asked you to go walking again. You see I want to be your friend in every way, and to give you the benefit of my eyes as to anything we do. But I see this with you — and I'm so glad ——"

Winifred gave me her hand, her face becoming gentle with a smile; and I went away carrying in my heart the walk of to-morrow.

CHAPTER XX

WHEN I got to Suevie's gate, Winifred was there — and with Mrs. Turner. "I brought Gypsy along, Skeet, for a chaperone. You are such a dreadful Don Juan, to whom honorable ladies proffer their love on beholding you, that it does not become a simple maiden like I am to be with you without a duenna." And so Winifred mocked herself and rallied me. But when we arrived at the foot of Parnassus, Mrs. Turner started down the valley to gather goldenrod, and left us quite to ourselves to climb to the oak trees on the top.

Winifred had brought a book; but we did not read. There was a wasted moon to the south of the hill, and the sun was only two hands' breadths over its rim. And we sat in the grass half green and half withered and yellow, tearing it up half nervously and breaking it into bits with our fingers, in the midst of our efforts to bring forth what was in our hearts. They gurgled with beginnings, half starts, broken words like fountains that do not flow.

I was approaching the words, trying to say them, at last saying: "I hope this is the right thing, Winifred — my going to school. It takes me away from you, it breaks up our old life. I'm afraid, yet I feel myself being pushed on. My telescope is being drawn out, and I see new objects, perspectives about me. On the other hand I could stay here, I could settle down to a regular thing with *The Intelligencer*. Or I could go to Chicago and take up the same work. Anything, Winifred, but the law; that is gradually entangling me. I can see it. And I can see that there is just one thing to save me — it is a weakness to say this perhaps —

but something figures in every life as the changing quantity, the determinative. As to going to school, it is my greatest ambition now; for my mind is hungry and I want to go on, I wish to store my mind; I am eager for the things I've never had. I wish to be greatly learned. And yet there is something over this; beyond it. My heart sways my head; and ambitions yield to my dreams."

"That's your young and imaginative heart, Skeet."

"Is it only that? I believe it is something deeper than that. For did you not read me out of Plato about human creatures as two halves, one being split in two, leaving halves that sought each other? I have always had this feeling of loneliness, which has now become so preoccupying; I have always grieved for lost days, departed happiness, changes, separations: and now, Winifred, you take the place of all of it. You sum up all that I ever felt in going away from the farm, in leaving my grandmother, in parting with Mitch; — and so when I think of going to school, eager as I am to learn, and then put by its side the prospect of being here with you, of uniting my life with yours, if it could be so, school and all that it means sinks to nothing."

"What a strange boy, Skeet, yet so adorable. And I understand you so well."

"Do you? How can you? I don't understand myself. I am a person unknown to myself. I am a mirror that passes along, turns about, catching figures, the landscape; among them, but not of them. I have always watched, listened. Something vital came out of me and took hold of Mitch. I became a living being through him. I did through my grandmother. But with them it was only hands coming out of the mirror. With you I seem to have stepped out of the mirror a complete being, and to have come to you with hands, with eyes, wholly; with my heart, with thought and flame and complete capacity for living."

Winifred sat with her head bowed. The September air was stirring around us; the chirp of crickets, no longer running from place to place in the trembling grass, sounded

intermittently here and there. Long shadows lay along the hill. The sun was closer to its rim, and the moon brightened amid the purpling lights.

Then I seemed to lose my sense of the world's reality. The breeze died down. There was a silence about us profounder than an empty cathedral. A spell took possession of all visible things about us — they became a dream. And I found myself out of this enchantment looking up into Winifred's face. I was lying in her lap, her arms were about me, holding me to her. Her sunny hair was falling about her forehead, its tendrils touching my face. And I looked into her blue eyes, and saw the light of her secret being gleam and come and go, like the white wings of a swan, appearing and reappearing behind blue flags and green rushes.

She unfastened her collar, leaving her throat and bosom bare. She pressed my head to her breast, her tears falling over me like dew from a broken flower. She began to speak, to chant. I sank into unconsciousness and came to myself again while she was saying: "I am your mother, Skeet, that is why you are drawn to me. You have never had a mother, and that is why you are lonely. And now you have found a mother in me. You do not know it; but this is it — this and the strange passion that has come to you — yes and to me. Yet think — these creatures about us — these venomous things that crawl and swim in this upper ocean of air, in this spot, this village, could mock us at prayer; could swim by and eye us with their bestial eyes while we communed with the Power that moves through us and unites us — communing in prayer or in love. For it matters not. Who dares to touch with irreverent hands what we feel for each other, what we have been, or might be to each other? And if you and I should share the ritual of love in its final mystery and ecstasy — who would dare? — yet have they not dared to put obscene hands upon what is most sacred to you and to me? Suppose it were true? This gift is as simple as light, as air; and I could give it to you with the sun for priest and the oaks for our altar — yes

were it not for the bitter truth that I can never be your wife; — not in the flesh, Skeet, for the terror that is before me — only as we are now, united by every bond except the one that links us to life to be.”

Had I slept, or swooned, or sunk into deeper intimacy with the presences that surrounded us? I became conscious that Winifred no longer held me. I was lying curled in the grass. I put my hands forth. They did not touch her. I looked up now quite quickly. Winifred was standing with her back to the sinking sun. Its flames burned in her hair, and limned the edge of her garment with a border of fire. She was looking into space, her hands extended in a gesture of delicacy, gentleness, of pensive rapture. She was the image of Bastien-Lepage's Joan of Arc; and as I looked the sun sank; the moon grew brighter, Winifred became a light amid the shadows in front of her, a darkness against the glory over the hill. A star appeared by the moon. The valley became dimmer; cool breaths ascended from it and stirred the grass about us like a passing messenger. And suddenly there was a voice, “Where are you, children?” It was Mrs. Turner at the foot of Parnassus. Her arms were full of goldenrod. “Come,” she said. “I must be home; and perhaps you should too.” . . .

Winifred walked slowly to where I sat. The trance was broken. We descended the hill, with all our problems unsolved. We walked back to town under the moon, through the silver lights and dark shadows. Winifred's mood was changed. She was talking merrily, quoting poetry, indulging in wild whimsies. She was all changed. But I was sober, subdued. I had not settled my heart.

We came to Winifred's house and she asked me in. Mrs. Turner had to go on; and we went in to find Mrs. Hervey smiling a welcome upon us. She had saved supper. Winifred and I ate together; and she was never more happy and radiant.

After the meal we read awhile. And then as I came to go Winifred said, “Wait a bit — it's so lovely without, wait.”

And I waited, and when the house was dark, her father and mother having retired, we went to the porch.

There was a swinging hammock here piled with pillows. Winifred unfolded a blanket, patted the pillows down, reclined upon the hammock, drew the blanket over her, leaving it open for me to enter by her side. "Come," she said. I took my place beside her, drawing the blanket over both of us. Winifred put her arms about me, pressed her lips against my throat, and sighed in expression of deep repose and happiness.

"Winifred," I whispered, "everything I have, or am, or can be, I give to you. Be my wife. We will go to Chicago together. What is school compared to this? I can learn from you all and more than I can learn at school. I can become a giant through you. Be my wife. It must be so. I have emerged from this strange mirror of myself, seeing you, dreaming of you. If you leave me how shall I return to that prison, re-enter the surface of this detachment, be free, invulnerable again? And if I cannot, you leave me to wander, a ghost evoked from its charmed, impersonal habitation, changed and abandoned in a world that cannot be made its own. Be my wife, dear."

Winifred drew nearer to me. I could feel her tears against my cheeks. She pressed me closer to her. "Please speak to me, Winifred."

"It cannot be, Skeet."

"Why?"

"Don't ask me."

"Is there some one in your life now — Dr. Giles — some one?"

"No."

"Then why? Don't you love me enough?"

"How can you ask?"

"What were you doing, thinking of, when you stood on the hill?" Winifred shuddered. "I can't tell you. It was a vision. Only two know what it was — myself, God. But I'll tell you, dear; I saw Death. Death is a being, an angel; I saw him."

"Winifred! You are not well! You are in a state of nerves. Come! be comforted. I am wholly yours. I give you my life. Marry me — let us go away, to-morrow, and begin our own life."

"Skeet! You urge me — you urge me, you keep pressing me to speak. You do not mean it; but it is a torture. Oh, my love, I would rather be your wife than anything in this world — but it cannot be — and if I should tell you why — you would not wish it."

"I would wish it no matter what your reason is."

"Would you like a wife who at any time, suddenly before guests, in her room, on the street, anywhere, swooned, fell as I did on the hill at Marietta? Would you like a wife who could not, who dare not, bear you a child?"

The ominous words of my mother flitted through my brain. I sank into the pillows of the hammock, Winifred's embrace falling away from me, mine relaxing itself from her. The life went out of me. Winifred shook, wept softly. And at last she said, "I have thought over everything — I cannot burden you with myself — not for life, not as your wife. But here and now I take you for my husband, and if disaster follows, I will bear it and die. This flame consumes all of us, uses or abandons us, why not quickly?"

And before this complete dedication, this last sacrifice of love, this surrender of life itself, I shrank as before the Holy Grail. The precious life blood of Winifred was in the cup. She offered and I could not drink.

Breezes came and went, rustling the leaves above us. Sounds of the night died away. For long minutes we lay vividly awake, concentrated in sorrow and thought. And at last with a catch in her throat, a sob in the beginning of sleep, Winifred turned on the pillow. Her breath came in slow rhythms. I spoke softly to her. She did not respond. Then, turning to her, I put my arms about her and slept too.

I was awakened by the first light of dawn. It was about five o'clock. Winifred was in heavy sleep; her face framed in a tangle of hair; a child-like innocence and sorrow on

her eyelids. It was fitting to depart, not to wake her; to have no separation of futile words, of dumb tears. I kissed her tenderly upon the brow and stole softly away. I left her in her virginal girlishness, a bride not won, a wife not possessed. And I went to my house, to be ready when the drayman should come for my trunk; and I should join "Grinner" to take the train.

I went in, but no one was astir. I did my last packing. I built a fire in the kitchen stove. I cooked my breakfast. It was six o'clock at last. My train left at seven. I went up and down stairs looking for things I might have forgotten in a kind of restless way of filling in the time. I was tempted to run back to Winifred and say a happy good-by — to act one, anyway. But the time had now grown too short for that. I looked to the straps of my trunk. I felt in my pocket for Winifred's picture, the one she had given me some months before. It was there. I heard the rattle of wheels. The drayman had come. "Grinner" was along, riding on his trunk. I went to the stairs and called "Good-by." There was no response. "Good-by," I called again. The drayman came to the door, took my trunk and loaded it. Again I went to the stairs and called "Good-by." All was silence. "Good-by" I called in a louder voice. The drayman and "Grinner" warned me that we had just time now to make the train. I went to the door, got on the dray. As we were driving off, my father raised a window and said something which was drowned by the noise of the wagon. We turned a corner and drove to the train. And in a moment "Grinner" and I were sitting in a seat together — Marshalltown was moving away from us; and we were speculating on the life to be. But my eyes were full of tears. I could not bear to say good-by to Winifred, to wake her to say it. I had tried to say good-by to my father and mother, to Myrtle. They slept. They did not wake to say it. They did not watch with me. A deep hurt was in my heart; and I was overshadowed with great loneliness.

CHAPTER XXI

"GRINNER" entered as a freshman in the classical course I found that, even if I had been permitted to try for this, I could not have classified. I was beyond the seniors in such a variety of things; and below the freshmen in languages, though not in mathematics. My piece of modeling was awry, as usual, half formed; over-made in some places, half finished or less in others, with my clay and my base gone to clods, my figure roughly emerged from the amorphous mass. Yet in looking myself over I felt self-congratulatory; and grateful to Marshalltown and my friends there. I had found science through Dr. Starrett, philosophy through Suevie Ross and Virgil Reese, the classics through Winifred; and help from "Grinner" and others. True to my promise I entered the law school; but I also took Greek; and now I had access to a large library. I found Kant which I had always wished to read; and Goethe's Faust; and all the Greek classics, in various translations; and Virgil and Horace, some of which I read in Latin with "Grinner."

We took board with Mr. and Mrs. Richards, who had other students. She was a laughing, familiar woman, who often came into my room with just a knock and without waiting for permission. She would busy herself making the bed, or sweeping. I sat deep in study. But she talked to me just the same; called me curly locks, and later would run her hand through my hair as she passed me. "You don't like the girls, do you?" "No," I said. "That's what everyone says. But I'll bet you have a girl in Marshalltown, perhaps. You act like a boy who has left a girl." "Do I? Well, I haven't." She would confront me in the hall as I

entered, standing across my way and laughing, sometimes chucking me under the chin. "How old are you? About sixteen — you look about that."

Mr. Richards was deaf; and he was dull. His face was huge and heavy, covered with a thick beard, which revealed sensual erubescence lips, between the mustaches. His enunciation was slow and retarded. He ate silently, looking down. Mrs. Richards paid no attention to him; and he never spoke to her except to ask her to be served. Winifred and I were corresponding, and Mrs. Richards always handed me Winifred's letters. At last she said: "A letter from your girl. Is she very pretty? Tell me about her." "From my sister," I said. I would put the letter indifferently in my pocket, and read it when I could be free from Mrs. Richards' intrusions.

The weeks and the months wore on. I found out, at last, that "Grinner" was preparing for the ministry. He had taken on Hebrew and Sanskrit; and here was I at the law and Greek; but doing an enormous amount of miscellaneous reading. I sent my marks in my law studies to my father. They were well toward a hundred. I kept my Greek a secret; and it was well concealed under the good reports on Blackstone. I had joined no societies. But I had attended some class parties, where I met Gertrude Webster, a gay and pretty girl, of whom I had heard in Marshalltown. She knew Myrtle — had met her somewhere. I called on Gertrude a few times, tried to escort her about some. But she seemed disposed to other society. So I deserted, and turned back to my studies, leaving everything of the sort entirely alone.

One day Mrs. Richards brought me a letter from Winifred. She said, "If this is from your sister open and show me." "It is," I said rather awkwardly; "but there's nothing in it you'd care to see."

"I'll bet you've never kissed a girl anyway. Let me teach you." She offered her lips. But the thought of it shamed me, made me shrink. Yet I did not want to be

exposed in my secret of Winifred. Was it not a good thing to kiss her? And especially as she brought her face close to mine, there was difficulty in escaping; so I was drawn into a kiss. Her lips were wet, slippery, and I hurried upstairs quickly to wipe my mouth.

Here was Winifred's letter:

"Dear Skeet: The most wonderful good fortune has befallen me. My aunt Mrs. Huntley Moore is going to Rome, sailing in February, about the 24th, and she has asked me to go with her. My dear father has consented and I am soon off! for you see a week from Wednesday is the 10th and I have promised to meet my aunt in Chicago on the 11th en route to New York. How shall we manage to see each other before I go? Can't you come to Galesburg on the 10th? I'll leave Marshalltown on the train you did (7 o'clock) and can stay in Galesburg until about seven in the evening. It would be nicer if you could come to Chicago, but perhaps that is less convenient for you. Do let me know. All your letters are such delights. Sometimes I read a little of one to father — do you mind? and I am so happy that you are sneaking Greek; it is quite the reverse of what happens generally; boys break away from it, rather than turn to it. And I think your law studies are stabilizing you, clarifying you, like egg put into coffee, which makes it bright and free of grounds, even if no stronger. I see I am rambling on — so just write me what you can do. And I shall be so happy to see you and spend a few hours catching up old times. I send you worlds of good wishes and tenderest friendship.

"Winifred."

I did not wait to write Winifred; I telegraphed her that I would meet her in Galesburg. For who could know whether I should see Winifred again, or what fate might come between our further intercourse?

That night "Grinner" went to a meeting of the Gnootautii where Dick Brown, a student half clown and half

genius, was reading a paper on "The Fly." Brown was the son of a well-to-do farmer. He paid some attention to cattle raising, and some attention to the English course that he was taking. He was interested in a fantastic way in science; hence this brochure on the fly. And the students were in a gala mood over Dick's essay; they were turning out to hear him. I could have gone; but I was too taken up with studies; too preoccupied with dreams of Winifred, and with the prospect of seeing her soon. About nine o'clock I retired.

I fell into sleep almost at once, and into dreams. I was with Winifred. I was living over our last night together. We were in the hammock. I could see the leaves brush the moon; I could feel the September breeze stirring in the darkness. The sorrow, the sacred happiness, of these hours passed through my drifting vision. Again Winifred was weeping softly, explaining to me why she could never be mine. I turned to take her closer in my arms — coming abruptly out of sleep, I touched a living body at my side. It was Mrs. Richards. And so what was to be done? For to come from dreams of Winifred to the reality of Mrs. Richards was more than my imagination could support, not to speak of any loyalty that controlled me. A spirit of mischief entered me. I thought of the little tailor in Grimm's stories who terrified his enemies by pretending to talk in his sleep. I pretended to be yet asleep. What was there to indicate to Mrs. Richards that I had awakened? Nothing. I had only turned in my sleep; I had not come out of sleep. Hence, to carry on the play, I began to grind my teeth and mutter incoherently. Mrs. Richards shook me gently and whispered, "What's the matter? Here! Here!" With that I began to talk in a louder voice, "All right! All right! Just wait till I get the horses!" Mrs. Richards shook me again. And I bawled almost at the top of my voice, "Here! Don't hitch those horses to that engine." Mrs. Richards jumped up and fled from my room. I turned over to the wall choking my mouth with the sheet to keep from laughing

outright. Pretty soon "Grinner" came home. I was still in a mood of mischief. So I began to talk again, of monsters, of engines, of Grecian heroes, mixing German and Greek words indiscriminately. I dared not open my eyes, but I could fancy "Grinner" as he stood listening in amazement and wonder.

A few evenings after this I was at the head of the stairs and began to overhear "Grinner" and Mrs. Richards in conversation. "Why," said "Grinner," "it beat anything you ever heard. He talks of all sorts of things; dragons, basilisks, catapults, wonder horses; he talks in German and Greek together like saying *Die Kora*, or *Der Anthropos*; and he goes on at a speed that no stenographer could catch." "Is that what it is?" asked Mrs. Richards. "I thought you two were quarreling the other night. I heard him say, 'All right! All right! I'll get the horses!' I thought you were in. Later you came; and then I wondered to whom he was talking. So that's it, is it?" And I stood at the head of the stairs and laughed.

But here was Mr. Richards, whom I had to meet at table, and sit beside. He looked down at his nose, he ordered his wife around; he lived in a fool's paradise, unsuspecting the woman, whom he thought of in no way except as his obedient mate; and lust was in her heart and faithlessness. Under the circumstances I could not bear to be near Mr. Richards.

The next morning after she had entered my chamber and my couch, I felt like a thief sitting beside the man he has despoiled. And yet I had done nothing. Mrs. Richards' nonchalance, her shameless gaiety in the face of what she had ventured, increased my embarrassment. And I determined to move to another boarding house. I took the occasion of my going to Galesburg to see Winifred to make the change. The night before I packed and was off, to "Grinner's" astonishment, who first demurred and finally came with me.

I am the runner in the course. Mrs. Richards has touched

my coat as I have passed ; but I am gone ahead, and see her no more.

I went to Galesburg the night before, so as to meet Winifred when she should alight from the train. She looked so bright-eyed and happy ; her hat had been tilted to one side of her head, in bumping against some one in the crowded aisle of the car. She was struggling, too, with a heavy bag. We checked it and started off for the day.

Winifred was going to Rome, to be there during Easter week ; then up through Italy, to France, Paris, arriving in England in June, to be back in the early fall. She was full of plans, in ecstasies over the interesting days ahead. "Oh, Skeet, if you only could go too." "Yes," I said, "but who will ever come along and take me? Who will ever say, 'You have worked enough, you have earned this ; come, I give it to you.'"

"No one, probably — for you are a man, Skeet."

"Yes — but a woman too ; there are such hosts of things I can't do for myself." "Years are ahead of you, Skeet ; you will probably go many times — and then you will look good naturedly upon this little jaunt of mine." "Oh, but you don't think I envy you this — you don't think that, Winifred?" "Skeet ! how absurd."

We bought a luncheon and went out to Lake Crescent at the edge of town. We sat for hours by the water, talking ; and all the while I was trying to formulate arguments, plans that would solve the fate that stood between Winifred and me? "You see I am the nearest person in the world to you, Winifred — and suppose all you say is as bad as you try to picture it — should I not be with you — doesn't the marriage ceremony say in sickness and in health? Why should I not stay by you as long as life lasts?" "You would do this, wouldn't you, Skeet? What a noble heart you have."

"No — Winifred, I love you, that's all ; I'm willing to make any sacrifice for you." Finally Winifred said : "I'll give you just a little hope, Skeet. My aunt is going to take me to some celebrated specialist — and if — if — I should see my way after that — I'll come back to you — I hope with words

to give you happiness. But listen, Skeet — I know so much of life through my reading, novels of life and so many plays — and I know what your problems as a man are. I don't ask, I don't expect of you the life that I shall live, that a woman seems destined to live. Go your way gallantly — I only ask you to be a gentleman always. I'll understand all the rest — but be a gentleman — honor the gifts that come to you, and honor the givers. You will; you could never look with lightness of mind upon any woman that was worth your attention; and if you find some one whom you wish for a wife, take her, Skeet, and my blessing will be upon you. And you can bring her to me; and we can be friends together, if she has the spirit to join us, just as if you had not married."

"Winifred! how can you talk so? I can never marry any one but you."

"Oh, yes, Skeet! You are not a page with a dimpled chin. Still I can fancy you years from now, all settled with a wife, your children about you; and some day you'll take out my picture, if you keep it so long, and you'll show it to your wife and tell her about me as a girl you knew as a boy in Marshalltown. Only I hope you will always feel that I was a benefit to you, an inspiring influence and a help."

"Winifred, it will never be — never."

"Skeet, I'll tell you something. There is such a thing as progression in love. Now suppose you should find some one later, who was all that I am, but something added, which charmed you too — don't you see yourself bringing to her all that you bring now to me, and heaping it up with other gifts out of your heart, evoked by the greater things which she is and I am not? Even these verses you have written me — perhaps they will fit her better than they do me. And she will fill them with reality, where I have only inspired them by stirring your idealism. Oh, Skeet, there are many secrets in the human heart. I know — and I make allowances for them. Take your freedom, Skeet — but if after taking it you come back to me, remain with me — and I

can return and give you my yes — how strongly we shall be united. Life will then have been good to us. Let us pray for it, Skeet; and thank God for what we have had."

And the day wore on. We went to the hotel for supper. And there at another table was Gertrude Webster with one of the boy students of Champaign. She too, was on a jaunt. She bowed to me with a friendly but distant smile; and here with Winifred I could see how far I was from Gertrude, her ways, her tastes.

There was so much to say. What I feared was that Winifred and I should part leaving something forgotten. "Have we thought of everything, Winifred?" "Everything, I think; just go on as you are going, Skeet. Your vitality is greater than any one's I have ever seen. You must strive to use it to the wisest advantage. What more can you do? Just go on."

The train came moving in. I helped Winifred into the car, sat with her in a hurried and broken minute. Then I had to leave. We had promised each other there would be no tears. And at the call of the porter I arose; our lips met in a parting in which all unexpressed things struggled to make themselves known. I turned and walked down the aisle. I looked back. Winifred was gazing after me with eyes wide and bright, like a bird with its breast shot away. Lights of pain, shadows of foreboding, pulsed in their planetary splendor — yet they were calm, as of a spirit supreme and triumphant. She seemed to reach to me out of their longing and their love, over the chasm that was now so narrow but in a moment would be so wide.

The train began to move. With a gesture of farewell I hurried to the platform and stepped from the car. The train glided by me. Winifred was gone!

I wandered about the streets waiting for my train. In a blur I started back to Champaign. I did not sleep that night. And the next day I moved in a dream amid the shadows of loveliness that had departed!

CHAPTER XXII

I FELL into a depression, and into an incipient illness within a few days of Winifred's departure. "Grinner" and I were now boarding at Mrs. Jones', a frail, lively little old woman of sixty-five, who used to greet us at the breakfast table with a smiling good morning and begin to give us an epitome of the day's news which she had gathered from the morning newspapers. Her house was kept immaculately; but the fare at the table was as simple and sparing as could be. And why not, considering what she charged us for it? There was an elderly Mr. Beckwith and his young wife boarding here too. He was testy and particular and in the midst of Mrs. Jones' discourse upon the topics of the newspaper, he would say, "This is all very well, Mrs. Jones, but what is the matter with the coffee this morning?" "Why, Mr. Beckwith?" "Well, it tastes like chicory!" "I buy the very best coffee I can get," Mrs. Jones would say. "Well, it tastes like chicory, that's all."

And so it did; and so it probably was.

There was a young artist here — a Paul Offield, who sketched me one night as I lay on the bed, grieving, half ill. It was sad enough; and Paul said, "Well, I'll declare! If you'll look at the sketch Severn made of John Keats at three o'clock in the morning, you will see how close the resemblance is." I took the sketch and studied it. It filled me with fear. Was I, too, to lapse into a decline? I was so wretched now; my eyes hurt me, my head; I was full of weariness. My first thought was to send the sketch to Winifred — but no! I could not distress her. This was really too sad to inflict upon her. So I kept it, put it away. For a few days

I was in bed. "Grinner" was most kind to me. He divined that I was grieving; but he asked me nothing, and I told him nothing.

It was not long before I had a steamer letter from Winifred full of amusing descriptions of the people on board; telling me of the gloom and the terror of the fogs around the banks of Newfoundland. After all, I was in touch with Winifred. There was distance between us, but letters softened it. And soon I had a cable from Winifred from Rome; surely she understood my feelings and meant to minister to them.

Days and the daily things sift seeds that sprout into softest moss around the sharpest rocks. I could remember the repairs made upon our house in Marshalltown, which in a little while lost their freshness and became a part of the old materials, undistinguished from them. I got an understanding of ancient tombs and monuments fresh from the mason's hand, then in a few months dulled slightly by the wind and the sand; until centuries made them old, and as if they had always been. And as to sorrow, its bright agonies dull and die away. Time sifts dust on all things. And amid studies, new faces, and with increasing and changing thoughtfulness, I settled into a life of habit in this separation from Winifred and its insuperable distance.

It was growing toward the spring now, and one day I had this letter from my father :

"Dear Skeet : I am leaving for Texas to-night upon a funny mission. Your Aunt Joana died two weeks ago, leaving a will in which she devised to your mother forty acres in Texas, and I am going down there to see what it is like; for your mother wants to sell it. There's a joke about it too, because she told your Uncle Harvey, who wrote me, that she wished to remember your mother in view of the fact that she had quarreled with her over the pronunciation of the word attorney — you remember! How is that? I congratulate you on your excellent marks in your law studies, which shows what you can do when you concentrate and do not monkey

with Greek and other things. I'll be back in about ten days.

"The Congressional Convention meets in Champaign about the time your school is out, so a little later I'll see you over there, or when you come home.

"Your father,
"H. K."

I had made a friend of Gerald Newcomer who had graduated the previous year and was an enthusiast in Greek. He was doing library work and taking some post-graduate studies. As the spring came on he helped me to read Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, and some of the Odyssey, that fitting book for the spring. "Grinner" read me some of the Eclogues and Georgics of Virgil. I was paralleling all these readings with translations drawn from the library; and with Faust and Schopenhauer, whom I had now found, my days were full of delight. Occasionally I sent some verses to the Chicago newspapers, signed "Willis Aronkeil." They were printed. I shared my secret with "Grinner," who thought well of them, but made no extended comment.

All the time I was not very well provided with money, and had to economize severely. There were boys around me sawing wood, taking care of horses and furnaces, to supplement their purses. I could have done these things; but they did not seem immediate. And yet I began to wonder how I could come back to school another year, particularly if I was not assisted by my father. I did not care to return for the law studies, as I could see that I could manage these without a teacher. But for languages I needed an instructor; besides, I wanted to be near a library where I could go on with my reading. I had planned for myself a long list of books, an extended course, and I meant to finish it.

School closed about the middle of June; but for a week or more before the last day the order of things was desultory; and in this condition I decided to replenish my purse by working for Gresham Marsh, the eccentric editor of one of the local

newspapers. He was deep in the politics of the town, and a delegate to the convention to which my father was coming as a delegate. And when my father arrived he caught me in the newspaper office. Gresham Marsh brought him to behold me. Then my father took me off and said: "He's all right in his way, but he never pays anybody; he won't pay you, and I want you to go home. My office is closed; your school is practically out, and I want you to quit this and go home."

"Very well," I said, "but I'd better finish the week out, so as to let Mr. Marsh attend the convention, and so forth, as he wished to; and then I'll go. But tell me, are you satisfied with my work in the law?"

"Yes, I'm satisfied — that is, your marks are all right."

"How about coming back next year?"

"I suppose so — but just now I want you to go home."

I finished the week out, and went to Mr. Marsh for my pay. "I'll send it to you," he said. "I'll send you a check." I had been expecting to use what he owed me for my fare to Marshalltown, and to buy some books to take along. Now I had to go to "Grinner." I dared not ask my father — I would not have dared to when I saw him, even if I had known that Mr. Marsh would not pay me. "Grinner" generously loaned me the money I asked him to. It was coin of the church too! And with it I bought "Don Quixote," Rousseau's "Confessions" and "Mademoiselle de Maupin," an Italian grammar, packed my valise, and went to Marshalltown.

It was mid-June. Our house seemed prettier to me than ever. The great maple trees threw inviting shadows about the porch. And between keeping the office I read "Don Quixote" and Rousseau and was very happy.

CHAPTER XXIII

NEVERTHELESS I noted a change in the atmosphere of the house. Mother and Myrtle were in closer friendship than ever. They seemed to be planning together about various things. I tried to tell them about my school year, the people I had met, the studies I had accomplished. I had seen a few plays of Shakespeare. I had heard a concert or two. I tried to tell them of these things. They were not interested. Or rather they made me feel that they had interests superior to mine.

My father returned from the convention; and so I was released from constant attendance upon the office. It was between court times and there was little to do. "Grinner" had come back, and was helping his father. He had definite plans for returning to school, and resources assured with which to do it. But I was in doubt about the future, and without resources, unless my father helped me. All the time I was bent upon making the best use of the vacation months; I was sneaking Greek with Suevie Ross, who had returned from Montreal, and who gave me time between work upon his "Clytemnestra." "Grinner" dropped around of evenings and we read Virgil; and during the day I sat under the trees absorbed in "Don Quixote," devouring Rousseau, and dreaming with Gautier over Greek art and civilization. All the while I missed Winifred unspeakably. The summer seemed a waste without her, spend it as I would. She had gone up through Italy. She had lingered at Geneva, gone to see Vevey where Voltaire lived, and out to the château of Madame de Staël. Now she was in Stratford, where her aunt Mrs. Huntley Moore often sojourned. She had heard

the larks singing, as they soared above the Avon River; she had rowed on it during the long bright twilights, "just as we did," she wrote, "at Dr. Starrett's when the whippoor-wills sang." And she was happy, but she was not wholly well.

My father often came to the French door and looked out upon me where I sat with Cervantes or Rousseau. I would glance up from my book to find his dark eyes fastened upon me. And once when he turned into the room, I heard him say to my mother, "What is that boy reading?" "French filth," she answered. And later I found him absorbed for a few pages in "Mademoiselle de Maupin." He laid the book down at last and stared at me in a significant way, but without speaking.

Thus the summer was drifting by. One day my father said to me: "Are you coming to the office this afternoon?" "Yes, if you need me." "Well, I don't need you, but I want to see you."

I went. He was writing, but laid the pen down and turned around in his accustomed way, facing me. "I think I have a way for you to make some money," he said. A chill went over me. I was willing to help him in the office, and if he meant this I was satisfied. If he meant something else I had fears that I would be taken away from the studies that I was trying to accomplish during the summer. I was making some money, as for that, helping edit *The Intelligencer*. Hence I was in dread. "What is it?" I asked. "Well, there is a man here named Swigert, who has the general agency of a book called 'The Golden Cornucopia,' which he sells remarkably. He is getting agents here; and your mother wants you to take an agency, and go out and see what you can do. Swigert is down at Old Man Bliss's, where he is boarding, and I told him you would be down at three o'clock. So you'd better be off and look it over. I'll buy your outfit for you; and you can go down in the south part of the county and try your luck."

"I can't sell books," I said.

"What can you do?" asked my father rather sharply. "You're not accomplishing anything here. You just sit around and read those worthless books. I thought if your girl was away you might get your mind on something. It seems not. I want you to try this. You could study law here in the office. But you don't; and there's no work here now that I can pay you for. And this is the best thing."

I felt unjustly treated, misunderstood. But after all, why did I obey him? I was free. I could have walked out of town without hindrance. The cattle boats were sailing to Europe. The trains were running north and east. I was not restrained or in chains. Why did I not go forth, start for myself? Again I answer why do the wisest men overlook their chances; the different path from the path they take? And the upshot of it was that I walked out of the office and down to Mr. Bliss's to keep the appointment my father had made for me with the unknown Swigert.

Swigert was low-voiced, a twinkle in his eye, butter on his tongue. His hands were soft, and moved smoothly over the literature of "The Golden Cornucopia," lying about him in various bindings of garish cloth and leather. He brought forth the speech I was to commit to memory. He spoke it off to me, telling me how I should emphasize its various parts; how to gesture as I delivered it, how to make it natural, and as if it were my own laudation of the book. "Here's an outfit," he said. "Your father stands good for one. Come back to-morrow. If possible have this speech committed to memory by then."

And I went away. There were Cervantes and Rousseau and Gautier, Homer and other books on my shelf, "Grinner" was coming with Virgil. I was due next day at Suevie Ross's to read Greek. Instead I had to commit to memory this shabby stuff about "The Golden Cornucopia." And I did. I returned the next day to see Swigert, and reeled it off, out of a heart full of disgust; and half ashamed. "That's pretty good," he said, "you'll make an agent. You ought to clean up \$200 by the time school commences."

I had to have some money to pay my way at hotels, boarding houses, farmhouses. I was allowed nothing for conveyances. I could catch rides or walk. My father gave me \$10 saying that I'd make some cash sales, and could deduct my percentage from them, and in that way have money after a few days. And I set forth to the south of the county upon this ludicrous mission, for to me it was thoroughly absurd.

In the first town I did my best. I went to every house. I could not even sell a book to the hotel man for my board. In fact I didn't sell a book to any one. I walked into the country. I tried the farmers. But they were shy. They had bought receipt books, books of universal knowledge sometimes, but this was an anthology of wisdom from Franklin, Socrates, Emerson, who not, and they were not interested. I walked to the next town. The dust was frightful; the heat sickening. I was discouraged. I felt degraded. It was not work that seemed fitting. I had earned money with my hands by setting type, by jobs of various sorts. But this was a kind of game, depending upon sharpness, powers of persuasion, the delivery of a set speech in an enticing way; and I could not muster the necessary heart to make it effective. I failed because I did not respect the book myself.

I had been on this excursion for nearly three weeks. My money was all but gone. I came to a little village. As I walked in I saw a woman hanging a washing upon the line. I went through the gate and introduced my subject. She said: "Just wait a minute till I dry my hands. Come in the parlor."

I went in. There were crude crayon portraits on the walls, a family Bible on a stand, some sprays of withered flowers on the wall, sparkling with the alum with which they had been treated. I began my speech. And my poor victim sat entranced. I was filled with shame, but I went on. Her eyes glowed. She kept interrupting me with, "I want to know! How beautiful, and what a lovely binding. It's just the book for my husband. His birthday is next month. How much do you say it is? Ain't it lucky you came along. Wait till I get my money." She went to the next room, returning

with silver coins. She paid me. I took the order and departed with her blessing. I shall never forget how red her face was from the heat and her work, or how bright with expectation of the book to come, and smiles for her good fortune. She bowed me forth to the next victim. Only there was no other. Disgusted with myself, bewildered for the future, but with an indignation over this venture which strengthened my resolution to go on with my school, I walked to Marshalltown, and delivered the outfit back to Swigert.

"What luck?" said my father. I told him, told him I would do anything before I would do this. He was silent. He got up to go to the clerk's office, picked up a letter from his desk, and said, "Here's something for you." Then he went out, leaving me to read what Winifred had written:

"Dear Skeet: We linger here at Stratford; but I think we'll be sailing in about three weeks. I have such a lot to tell you — somehow I can't write it. I have fallen into such a different mood here, seeming to be content just to drive about, see the interesting people who come to visit my aunt, and live. I don't read anything. And when I sit down to write you, the labor of going into details overpowers me. Hence these sketchy letters I've been sending you, which are a poor return for yours which are so full of you, your thoughts, and readings. Frankly, however, I'm not wholly well; and just to drift and not to be obliged to do anything, pleases me best. I didn't say much to you, but the last few weeks at Marshalltown were nerve-wracking to me, and exhausting. My mother, too, was so distressed over the horrid things that came about our friendship, and our walks. Don't worry, though; for I'll be quite myself soon. If you're off to school when I return, we must arrange to meet soon; for I have so many things to tell you about all I've seen. I hope your summer has been happy — and I send you blessings and love out of a heart so devoted to all you strive to be, and all you hope for happiness and achievement.

"Winifred."

I looked at the date. It had been written fourteen days before. And here was I caught up out of the atmosphere of "The Golden Cornucopia" and my wretched experience with it, into this sweet communion with Winifred. I looked across the street into the court house yard. Lawyers were stretched in the grass. Men were crouched down on the sidewalks whittling and talking. The town was still. Exhausted leaves fell now and then into the grass. I looked about the office. I felt so terribly alone — so deserted, so without some one to complement my existence. Winifred was gone. And even if she were here what could we do? For there was nothing in this letter to indicate that she was coming into a state of health where we could alter her decision made to me. And our last days together were hampered by the village gossip.

My reveries were broken by some one calling me. I looked out of the window. It was "Grinner" in overalls, driving the delivery wagon. "Come down here," he said. "I can't, I'm keeping office, come up." He drove to the rack, tied the horse. In a moment he came in the office, his face tense with excitement. "Have you heard the news?" he asked in a quick voice. "No, what?" "Winifred Hervey's dead." "What?" "Her father just got a cable now."

All the strength went out of me. My head fell over on my breast. My arms shriveled into nerveless rags. I could not speak. I became blind. All powers of thought fled me. I seemed to lose consciousness; but to fall into a state where enough of consciousness was left for an agony which penetrated to the core of my heart. I didn't notice when "Grinner" left the room. I heard a step. My father entered. He looked at me and sensed my collapse. He only said: "This is bad news." Then he went out; and I sat in the same place without stirring until darkness came in the room. Then I walked to Parnassus and lay down in the grass and wept.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE next days that followed led me through a dream existence. By day I went about oblivious of my surroundings; by night I lay for hours before sleep came staring into the darkness; or if I closed my eyes, my soul seemed to soar out of me and drift into infinite spaces, circling like an eagle in search of its mate, or a new habitation. Winifred's body was wasting in the soil of England. I counted the days and the nights; so many days in the earth; so many nights. At last a week, ten days. What was taking place in her beautiful flesh, her exquisite face? What was moving through her sunny hair? What mould had settled upon her brow, her cheeks? What withering decay had come upon her delicate fingers? Her body was sinking into the soil of England. But where was that radiant spirit? I could not find her. I did not even dream of her when I slept. Her letter as I read it over had lost the echo of her voice. It had come to me a living tone of her spirit; now that was gone. Winifred had wholly vanished. I had nothing left of her but the memory of our days together.

In a few days I went to see Mr. Hervey. He was sitting on the side porch, where the hammock had been. He was grave, self-possessed. Neither of us mentioned Winifred's name, though nothing else was in our thoughts. He arose at last in the twilight, went into the house, and returned with a book. It was Winifred's Greek Bible. "Here, Skeet, — I thought you might like this, and I give it to you. Mrs. Hervey wants you to have it."

I went away pressing the precious volume to my heart, blinded with tears. And I began to read that night, turn-

ing over the leaves that betrayed so much of the touch of Winifred's fingers. As I have said before I had always been a listener, a watcher. Nothing had ever taken hold of me, become a part of me. And this was true of any religious experience. I had been all through my boyhood in contact with my grandfather's piety; and I had attended many revivals; I had associated with religious minds. But it never entered into me. I stood detached from it, a Greek, a Gentile, neither doubting nor believing; but examining always, interested, but not involved. But out of my reading; because of my association with Winifred and the knowledge I obtained through her of the beautiful Greek mythology; also because of what I had learned of Greek art and literature through Suevie Ross; also because of my philosophical studies, and my excursions into science through Virgil Reese and Dr. Starrett; and from some contemplation of Greek statuary of the gods and the Temples, as I saw them in classical dictionaries loaned me by Winifred and by Suevie Ross — because of these things and much else I had conceived an unspeakable loathing for the Jewish Yahweh or Jehovah. I had contrasted the human attributes both dignified and capricious, generous and whimsical of Zeus with the bloody, vengeful, fanatical traits of the Jewish God. My mind was made up in favor of Zeus — Zeus of many loves and many children; Zeus of banquets, of laughter and amours; of punishments and rewards, yet out of a spirit urbane and humorous. And in Jehovah I could see nothing but hatred, sanguinary revenge; horrific scowls, which darkened the heavens; murderous prejudice, preposterous thaumaturgy, and an unreasoning partiality for a barbaric people, warring with all peoples around them, habitually beaten and perpetually wailing and cursing. Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, even Greece had flourished and died away; but this people, by one of those combinations of historic circumstance which make life theatrical, and by innate powers of resistance, had survived over all these wrecks. They now ruled the world of theology in Europe,

in the Occident, as they ruled the world of finance, through a train of causes which led to God the Father.

I could look about me and rejoice in nature. The deep azures were beneficent; the waters life-giving; the death of growths, of flowers and trees, the sinking of man into the soil, as a leaf falls to the ground, was not harsh to my imagination. But once I was told God is love, or God is good, the contemplation of life was lifted to the realm of spirit. And what is good, where is this dispensation of nature, so calm, yet remorseless, so destined to change and extinction — where is that in the spirit of man, conducted as it is to this place of struggle and defeat in so much, if not all that occupies the spirit as needful and desirable? If God is a God of the living and not of the dead; if He is a God of the spirit of man, why does He not rule, conduct, preserve, solace the spirit of man? And why bring me to the revelation of a soul like Winifred's and then take her away into a silence that I could not penetrate?

With these speculations running through my mind I determined to see what portrait had been drawn by Jesus of God the Father. For if Jesus be the most inspired spirit made manifest upon this globe, as millions believe, whether He was man or God, His portrait of God the Father should show something of what He is, and something of the goodness that is His. And so I read Winifred's Bible to find these things — to get the delineation by Jesus of Nazareth of God the Father.

To begin with, all of the mythologies which symbolize the death and the revival of the year in the cycle of Osiris, or the story of Persephone, or Adonis touch with grace the spectacle of nature and the relation of man's spirit to it; and while the story of Jesus is in essence the same, it has added to it the Jewish conception of sin, and a doctrine of atonement, which nullifies the assumption of God the Father, both as a good and a wise God. He has made the world, and He has made man; man has failed. And in St. John it is written, "Therefore doth my father love me,

because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

I pass without comment the curses that have been pronounced upon Judas, in spite of this doctrine; as well as the saying of Jesus himself that it must need be that offenses must come; but woe be to him through whom they come. "There is none good but God," said Jesus; and in reading Winifred's Bible I sought the goodness of God to mitigate the agony of death that had come into my life through the passing of Winifred. And did I find it?

Forgiveness! To overlook a wrong, a trespass, to consider the ignorance or the weakness that perpetrated the wrong; to make allowance for passion, anger, misunderstanding; traits or poison in the blood, circumstances of all sorts. This is to be noble. Is God the Father so? No! According to Jesus his son, God the Father will forgive those who forgive them their trespasses; He will not forgive men who forgive not men their trespasses. He has all the advantages in wisdom, He is invulnerable Himself, yet He will only forgive those who forgive!

Resist not evil! Return for evil good! Why doesn't God do so to His creatures? He doesn't. He threatens the very reverse of this: punishment for evil. Yet this blind mass known as humanity is to be cast into outer darkness for not accepting doctrines that their author did not make clear and which remain in obscurity to this day in spite of ten thousand expounders. Yes, good for evil; yet it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for the city that does not receive the itinerant preachers of the faith of Jesus. Woe unto thee Chorazin! because if the work done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago. Why were they not done in cities that would have repented? Why were they done and so wasted in Chorazin that did not repent? done too by a God who looked before and knew

that Chorazin would not repent after they were done! And thou Capernaum shall be brought to hell; for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, Sodom would not have been destroyed by fire and its people wretched and mad, bewildered and lost in the maze of life, would not have been roasted to death. Then Jesus after pronouncing these curses, and touching the portrait of God the Father with these implications turns to prayer, and thanks God the Father, that these things, namely the things by which Sodom might have been saved, and for the rejection of which Chorazin will be destroyed — these things have been hidden from the wise and the prudent and revealed to babes. That is kept from those who could have used them, rulers and thinkers; and revealed to the simple-minded, the weak, the outcasts, who can do nothing with them. And no man knows the Father but the Son; and the Father shall be known to all to whom the Son shall reveal Him, under the dispensation of the Father! We must forgive in order to be forgiven; but the sin against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven in this world, or the world to come. And Jesus for the Father, shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and all those who do iniquity and cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

And so I read in Winifred's Bible. And the conclusion was forced upon me, that God the Father is only a little better than Yahweh; and that God the Father as painted by Jesus of Nazareth is no better than man himself. Do I commit my Winifred to God the Father? No! but to the fire of the sun, the azures of heaven, the winds of land and sea, to waters, oceans and streams, and to the earth instinct with life, eternally putting itself forth in leaves, flowers and fruit. And for the rest man's spirit has no God the Father but what inheres in it of power to think, to create its own solace and cures; power to build its own havens of refuge in color and sound. Upon this God my bereft soul was thrown. I stood alone, spiritually separated from all

fables and superstitions; and alone as a social being, because Winifred was gone; and as for father, mother, or sister, I could say with Jesus himself, who is my mother and who are my brethren?

In this hardness and brightness of soul I began to examine with great attention of mind all that I read, all that I had taken into my thinking. To Suevie Ross I owe the faculty not to take things on say so without examining the premises. Once I had come to him with a translation of the Hymn of the Soul by Bardesanes, and submitted to him with delight the postulate from it: "If the first cause were soul all things would possess soul."

"No," said Suevie, "the first cause might be soul, and all things not possess soul; for who knows but what there is a process of the soul as first cause, by which dirt without soul can be created? Who knows? For that matter all things may possess soul. Who knows? And the first cause may not have soul, and yet all things of the earth possess soul."

And so I set about to examine myself. I applied to my thinking the analytical processes of the law. I began to reason about everything. This was one of the effects of Winifred's death. And another was that I became capable of greater suffering; and better fortified against disappointment. It was well. For now another misfortune overtook me.

CHAPTER XXV

It is one thing to look at my interrupted schooling through the telescope standing at the window; it is another to view it looking back from the top of the Mason County Hills. For what did it matter whether I learned more Greek or not, whether I went through college or not? What appreciable effect did it have upon my mind, its capacity? And if it had ever so much, what difference did it make to the world, whether I was all that I could be, or only half of what I might have been?

"Grinner" was making ready to go back to school. Suevie had already returned to Montreal for his last year. Nothing was said to me about going back. I was looking for an opportunity to bring the subject up. One day I said to my father: "I must be packing soon! 'Grinner' is going Monday." My father did not turn from the window to answer me, out of which he was looking into the courthouse yard. He said: "I supposed you knew you were not going back." "Am I not?" "Well, I can't really afford it. Your mother wants to send Myrtle east for the year, so as to give her as much as you have had. And that's the plan. Besides, I am running for Congress. Your grandfather is sending me a horse to use in riding around to electioneer. It will be here to-day. Henry is bringing it. You can help me in the office, study law, and be admitted to the bar by spring. As I have said before, you know more now than a Yale graduate; and the law is the best thing for you. You have the mind; and I want you to get out of this scribbling and miscellaneous reading."

A kind of flagellant anger entered me. I seemed to be

caught. I decided to load myself with law studies, to apply myself with a kind of fury to it, seeing that I was thus thwarted, defeated at every turn. Evidently my father communicated to my mother at once that he had informed me of my fate. For the next day at noon my mother followed me to the gate and with a subtle smile of triumph, which seemed to bespeak elation over a secret plot of her own, she said to me: "Now you are going to be a lawyer. And you will be so thankful later on." Her words were poison; and I could almost read delight in her face that she had struck me with such envenomed force. I concealed my feelings under a brief "yes" and went to the office.

"Grinner" came around. When he found that I could not go, he was grieved. Again he informed me that the church was helping him; and he wished that I could receive assistance from the same source. But the church could not divide its house by helping me. Indeed I should not have accepted its aid. For now the church, speaking through the mad hatred of Tecumseh Lindsay and the Machiavellian envy of Judge Hancock, was doing all it could to destroy my father. I was aroused to the fiercest activity by this opposition; and wrote for *The Intelligencer* columns of matter in support of my father's congressional candidacy. My father was riding around the country now on "Pepper-dog," the horse loaned him by my grandfather; and I was keeping the office, studying law, and editing *The Intelligencer* in my father's behalf, Rev. Chapin having surrendered to me a full editorial policy to that end.

The day of the convention came. I did not wish to attend it; but Davis, then about eight, disappeared; and there, as it turned out, he had gone. I was home in the middle afternoon, as Myrtle and my mother were. And suddenly we heard Davis crying down the street. He rushed into the house convulsed with grief and between his sobs lamenting, "They beat him and then they all yelled." Davis went out then to look for his dog Carlo and be comforted. He did not find him, and after vainly calling to him around the yard,

he sat on the gatepost through the afternoon lifting up his voice: "Carlo! Carlo!" letting it pass in a diminuendo of grief. We found Carlo's dead body by the woodhouse. He had been poisoned—and by whom? Was it Douglas Thomas who was working with his brother Henry, and with Tecumseh Lindsay and Judge Hancock, against my father? Had he done this to make it synchronize with my father's defeat?

The horse had to be taken back to the farm. So I rode "Pepperdog" on a day's trot, going through the desert the edge of which I had passed with John Armstrong and Mitch in those years long ago, as I tell about in "MITCH MILLER." There was no joy for me at the farm. My grandfather was silent; my grandmother exasperated over the turn in my father's affairs. Again she said: "It was a mistake for him to move." I returned to Marshalltown grimmer in spirit than ever.

Then Myrtle went east. The campaign was over; and I dropped all my work on *The Intelligencer*. I applied myself wholly to the law. I bought an abridged Blackstone, and committed the definitions to memory. In May I went to Springfield to take the examination for admission to the bar. The three examiners were judges. They plied me with questions written and oral. In the oral test one of the students was asked whether he would purposely deceive a court as to the law. Being an honest youth and a wise one, too, he said he would. And for this answer he was refused a license, by these dignitaries, who themselves had twisted, inverted, sophisticated precedents in the support of a cause; and who knew that judges refine, split, and with casuistry differentiate principles of the law and decisions of courts, in order to escape from otherwise ineluctable conclusions; and who knew that jurisprudence as a whole is a mass of stultification and contradiction. To be ignorant of the law is far more excusable than to be ignorant of a fact; for no one knows, not even its maker, what the law is until it is made.

I returned to Marshalltown a lawyer. I was a printer too. I had a newspaper experience. If I could not make my way now I never could. I decided to go to the city — to Chicago. Winifred's death drove me from nature to the granite canyons of the metropolis. Uncle Harvey was now living there. I wrote to him. He invited me to come to his house. Aunt Joana had not long been dead; but he was married again. Out of a clear sky I confided to my father the plan I had conceived. He was grieved. I could see he needed me. The battle still waged fiercely around him. He needed an armor bearer — he could ill afford to lose my writing in *The Intelligencer*, though he had always discouraged it. But notwithstanding all this I was off.

Mrs. Turner had me to dinner the evening I left. It was kind of a last supper over which Winifred's spirit was the presiding influence. Dr. Starrett and Mrs. Starrett happened by. They were surprised to find me going. All stood at the door in a sad sort of silence as I walked to the gate. At the station my father was waiting for me. He had brought me a letter of introduction to Burke Gray, a prominent railroad lawyer in Chicago. "He is an old friend of mine, and he will befriend you," said my father. And the train came. I said good-by and got in. I did not look back. Tearless and hard I sat with eyes fixed straight ahead. I did not look out of the window at the disappearing scenes of Marshalltown. I was as concentrated as a spider waiting for prey. It grew dark. We were coming into unfamiliar country, strange towns and villages. Soon it was midnight. But I did not sleep. I was burning steadily with thought. The east grew brighter. The stars dimmed. Villages grew closer together. At last there was a far extended fringe of houses, smoke, dust, the breathing of a vast life, under the July dawn. It was Chicago. The telescope slipped to the third section.

THIRD SECTION

CHAPTER XXVI

THE houses grew closer together. Street lamps multiplied. Smoke stacks rose up here and there. Streets doubled back of us like the blades of closing scissors. The hot mist, blue and white, like leprosy, was impregnated with the smell of hops, malt, brewing; with the vapors of rendering fats, with the sting and the nausea of illuminating gas. All around us were great poles strung halfway of their height with wires which carried messages and the commands from this giant brain to the Gargantuan sprawl of the surrounding country and states. The houses became larger, built of brick instead of wood. We looked into small back yards, where ragged, dirty children were playing. We rattled past second story porches where laundry was strung, and men in undershirts were watching us, smoking pipes. The smoke stacks became thicker. We shot across viaducts, getting glimpses of boulevards with trees. In the distance residences of comfort and luxury appeared. We began to rattle across tracks as numerous as the rays of a light; by watch towers. We stopped at a station. We started again, going across more numerous tracks, farther into the smoke and dust, the noise, which roared like a loom. Two men who had tried to engage me in a card game in which I could make some money slipped to the platform of the car and dropped off. We paused again momentarily. The train lurched and got under speed again; and in a minute we drew under a grimy shed. It was Chicago! And I had never seen a city before!

I got off, carrying my heavy valise, and started forth to follow the direction given me by Uncle Harvey in his letter. At that I felt compelled to make inquiries concerning the street car I should take. I found it and in a few minutes I was ringing a door bell. The door was opened; and there stood Uncle Harvey, behind him three women, all with board faces and gimlet eyes. One was his new wife, another her sister, another their mother. Uncle Harvey had changed. He was bent, he was gray. But his face was happier. All of the three spiders hugged me, and said I was their nephew too; the old lady said I was her grandson. And I was conducted to the dining room for breakfast.

A thousand eyes seemed to stare upon my greenness as I entered. I was introduced to Lillian McFee, a girl with red hair and ruddy eyes; to Mary Call, whose wrists were bandaged; to Billy Phelan, who looked like a picture in a fashion plate; to Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, both large and dark; to Madame Lefevre, a French widow, who seemed to take me in at a glance. I was seated by Madame Lefevre and across from Lillian McFee, who smiled at me in a way which expressed her amusement at my clothes, my provincial air. Madame Lefevre asked me about the country, and if I had any difficulty in finding the house. Billy Phelan and Mr. Thompson were talking of the races of the day before, and about the horses which would be safe to play to-day. Uncle Harvey inquired about my father and mother and Myrtle. And Aunt Letitia wanted to know what mother was doing with the Texas land. And in a moment, almost, the scene changed. Billy Phelan snatched his hat and rushed out to catch a street car. Mary Call went her way. Lillian McFee appeared to have no occupation. She simply went upstairs. The Thompsons got into a victoria, that was waiting at the door, and drove off. Madame Lefevre, it seemed, was a nurse, at the present off duty. She went to her room. Uncle Harvey began to potter about the house. He did the marketing and helped with the sweeping. The three spiders put towels on their heads, and began to

dust and clean the house. At last I was in the front room trying to read the morning paper. I was waiting to go down into the city with Uncle Harvey.

We started about eleven o'clock. I wanted to present my letter to Burke Gray. I had just \$15.00; and Aunt Letitia had already told me that I could have board for \$7.00 a week, that the price was \$10.00 a week, but as I was a relative the lower price had been agreed upon for me between her and Uncle Harvey. It was necessary therefore for me to get something to do at once. Still I was free now; and I had resolved to see the editor of one of the newspapers for which I had been writing under the pseudonym of Willis Aronkeil. I could not ask Uncle Harvey to take the time to go everywhere with me. I thought I could get some acquaintance with the streets, the general location of buildings on this first trip with him, present my letter to Burke Gray first.

Uncle Harvey took me to the great building where Burke Gray had his office. I was confronted by a brisk secretary who said that Mr. Gray was on his vacation and would not return for a month. That was good or ill fortune, as one might regard it. It might lose me a start in the law; it might win me a place on a newspaper. For I could not wait a month for work.

Uncle Harvey and I started on a brief tour of the downtown district. He pointed out to me the newspaper building that I wished to visit later. And after an hour or so we came back to the boarding house. Luncheon was served. And I sat now at table with Lillian McFee, Madame Lefevre, and the family. All the rest were absent. Then I went to my room and unpacked my belongings. I took out my books: "Don Quixote," Rousseau, "Mademoiselle de Maupin" in French, for Suevie Ross had taught me some French, and I found my little Latin a help too; and Winifred's Greek Bible, and put them on the table. As I was doing this there was a rap at my door. I opened. It was Lillian McFee with the same deviltry in the smile on her lips. "Some

clean towels for you." She glanced in my room and went on. I closed the door, sat down by my one window, which looked into the space back of saloons and restaurants. I tried to read, became drowsy, lay on the bed and slept. For I had not closed my eyes during the night.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE next day I went off alone, making directly for the newspaper office. I came into an outer room on the sixth floor where I had to give my card to a secretary before seeing Mr. Holt, the managing editor. My card bore the name "Willis Aronkeil." In a moment, without delay, a white-bearded, black-eyed man, good-natured and brisk, walked into my presence. With a smile he said, "So you're Willis Aronkeil." He took me by the arm and turned me around. "I had expected to see an older man. How old are you?" "Twenty-two." He looked incredulously at me. "Come in," he said. He was at work at top speed. There were piles of papers on his desk. The telephone rang. Men entered with articles in manuscript, in proof. But he gave me generously of his time. "Well," he said, "what are you doing here?" "Trying to get on a newspaper." An expression of pity passed across his face. "So here you are fresh and young, trying to break into what will quickly make you tired and old. Don't do it, boy." "Well, I wish to write, and I think this is the way." "To write what?" "I don't know, verses, stories, what I have written for you." "You don't need to get into this trap to do that." "But I must live." "All right, carry up coal, be a janitor." I thought he was mocking me. "Yes, almost that. This is no entrance to the writing game. Is there nothing else you can do for a living?" "Don't know; I'm a lawyer." "A lawyer! Say, get out of here — quick! You a lawyer and ask to get into this treadmill; wait, I'll give you a letter to George Higgins. His case was just like yours. He was a lawyer and tried to get in here. I refused him, sent him to his profession. Now he is pros-

perous, independent, writes too. What folly to think of anything else!" He scribbled a note and handed it to me. "Go over to see George, it's about four blocks from here. He's a fine fellow, will talk to you, knows you as Willis Aronkeil too. He's often spoken to me of your articles. And I'll tell you what I'll do, if he doesn't say I was right in guiding him away from newspaper work into the law — come back here and I'll give you a job." He arose and took me by the arm, half pushing, half leading me from his office. The telephone was ringing. Men were coming to him for instructions. And in a moment I was in the hall!

I went over at once to see George Higgins. He was out of the city on a vacation, would not return for a month. Yes, it was vacation time. I had come to Chicago at an inopportune season. I strolled about the streets, went into a buffet which reminded me of Auerbach's cellar; drank a beer, ate some of the delicious free lunch, and started back to the boarding house.

There I found Madame Lefevre reading. She was French; could she help me with "Mademoiselle de Maupin"? "Madame Lefevre," I said, "could you help me read some French?" "Oui, Monsieur, with pleasure." I had nothing to do, so I went to my room, got the book, returned. "What is it?" she asked. "Oh," she exclaimed when I handed her the book. "Does Monsieur read this?" "Yes, I've already read it in English. I've been taught a little French; my Latin helps, so I'm reading this. Have you read it?" "Yes, but you!" She looked me over. "After all, you may be very wise." After all! Yes, in spite of my clothes, my rustic appearance.

I sat in a chair, Madame Lefevre looking over my shoulder, prompting me, interpreting words I didn't know. We started with the preface, reading Gautier's castigation of Puritanism, his eulogism of Greek art and life. I became conscious of eyes, looked up. Lillian McFee was standing between the portières of the double door. "Losing no time," she said, and passed on.

At dinner that night all the boarders were at the table, Billy Phelan was natty in fresh linen, his hair parted in the middle. Mary Call sat quietly. Her bandaged wrists were a mystery to me. Lillian McFee stared with her ruddy eyes; the vampire smile played on her lips. Mr. Thompson was talking to Billy Phelan about the races of the day, explaining why the horse "Emma B" lost the race. Billy said, "Well, she cost me ten bones, I thought she was a sure winner." Presently Mr. Thompson and Mrs. Thompson left the table, and I asked Madame Lefevre: "What does he do?" "He's a book-maker," she said. "What kind of books does he publish?" I asked. Lillian McFee choked on her water, spurring it over the table. Billy Phelan yelled. Even Mary Call cackled. Madame Lefevre said with just a kindly laugh, "Oh, he doesn't publish books; he makes books of bets on the races." I was covered with shame. Lillian McFee continued to laugh, presently leaving the table to have done with her humor. And even Uncle Harvey smiled. Grandma wanted to know what was the matter. Aunt Letitia said: "Never mind, Skeet. It's to your credit that you don't know about such things." "Skit," said Madame Lefevre — "is that your name?" "No, it's Skeet," said Aunt Letitia. But Madame Lefevre said "Skit." She couldn't pronounce Skeet.

In the afternoon I looked through the want advertisements. I had to get work. It would soon be Saturday. I would owe \$7.00, half of all I had. I could not get into newspaper work until I saw George Higgins. I could not play my best card in the law without seeing Burke Gray. What was I to do?

And Saturday came. I paid my bill, and began to sense desperation ahead. In the evening I was sitting on the porch with Madame Lefevre. Billy Phelan came out, dressed for a stroll or a jaunt. "What are you doing, Skeet?" he asked. "Nothing."

"Well come with me and take a turn." I started down the steps with him. Madame Lefevre called: "Take good

care of him, Billy, do you hear?" "Oh, yes," said Billy, and we were off.

"You look a little lonesome, Skeet." "I am." "Well, I'll show you around a little." He took me up and down streets, pointing out to me the residences of the millionaires. Victorias drawn by docked horses filled the avenue. Billy knew some of these magnates by sight, and named them to me. Were they happy? How proud, self-satisfied they looked. How safe against poverty, anxiety! How far away from my thoughts, who had but \$7.00 in my pocket and no way at present to earn any more.

At about eight o'clock we entered a concert hall. It was a hubbub of voices, the air blue with smoke; men and women were at tables drinking; the women had cigarettes, waiters rushed around filling orders. Over the din a woman in tights on the stage was trying to make herself heard. I could only catch these words:

"Tip your hat to Nellie when you meet her passing by:
Tip your hat to Nellie, you are sure to catch her eye."

We sat at a table. Billy ordered beer, and I drank. It was good. It soothed me, exhilarated me, drove grief for Winifred out of my heart, made me forget my straitened circumstances. A girl sitting with another girl at a near table beckoned to Billy with her head. He beckoned back, and the two girls came to our table. On closer view they were hard, tired creatures, speaking a vulgar slang of drink, of races, of shabby misfortunes which had overtaken some girl or some man. We drank more beer. The girls smoked. The hubbub grew louder. The orchestra strove with the rising tide of the pandemonium. Other singers appeared on the stage, acrobats, jugglers, dancers. All at once I spied the face of Lillian McFee. She was not far from us. And again she was smiling satanically, as much as to say: "Don't you know what I am? What do you think of the game?"

It was toward midnight, at last, or later. Billy said "Come." "Where?" I asked. He drew closer to me: "To their rooms — there's plenty of drinks there — and quieter." I had no idea of going; but I left the hall with them, as if I meant to go all the way. In the entrance some other girls accosted Billy; the incoming crowd swirled around us. I could see Billy; but I perceived that he was looking for me; I knew I was lost to him. I stood where I was and let him scan the faces to find me. After a while he went with his girls out to the street. I continued to stand where I was. Finally I ventured forth. They had disappeared. And I returned to the boarding house.

The next morning Billy was not at breakfast. He had not returned home during the night. Lillian was not at breakfast either. But she appeared at dinner, looking bright-eyed, her color enhanced by rouge. Madame Lefevre said: "Skit, did you have a gay time last night? Beware the city," and she laughed. Lillian looked at her like a snake about to strike. "Where do you get the right to watch over people's morals?" Madame Lefevre was visibly embarrassed. "Pardon," she said. "My remark was quite innocent, Miss McFee." "Innocent?" snapped Lillian. "There's another nice word for you." Madame Lefevre dropped the exchange, she could not go on without quarreling with Lillian, who was plainly irritable and reckless. She turned then upon Mary Call with a sting in her voice. "How's your wrists, Mary? Gee, but ain't rheumatism tough!" Aunt Letitia had told me what "lovely people" she had in the house; and in apology of these vulgar sallies at the dinner table she said, "They're just in fun; it means nothing." But Uncle Harvey, silent as of old, knew what manner of people he had around him. He acted, however, like a man who has ceased to resist, and accepts whatever is.

Billy Phelan stumbled into the house about four o'clock in the afternoon. He was frightfully sick. Lillian McFee laughed like a fiend. I felt sorry for him, helped him to his room; and in consequence he drafted me to take care of him.

I had to bring him the bowl, bring him water, sponge his face. At supper I brought him tea and toast. During the night he called to me from his room. I arose, went to him and helped him through. And the next morning I took a note to the cashier at his place of work; a note that said he was ill and would be down Tuesday. The cashier pulled his nose in a grotesque way, turned to a bookkeeper and said, "Here it is again." And I went my way.

That evening Madame Lefevre took me for a walk. And she said: "How late were you out last night?" "About midnight." "Skit, be careful — oh, you can't be too careful. You see I'm a nurse; I know. Where did you go?" "To a concert hall, an Auerbach cellar or worse." "Nowhere else?" "No." "Oh, I'm glad. I was worried. You're a sweet, clean boy, do be careful. In a moment you can sow the seeds of a lifetime of suffering, horrible disease, madness, or invalidism at last. Do be careful. Promise me." "Yes, I promise you."

For amid all the wild sensualism of the night Winifred's face was before me. My worst thought was that after so much of study and cloister-like life in the country I would descend to Auerbach's cellar; I would feed my body, my senses, temperately but to the point of knowledge, no more, of a different life. But I did not really know to what specific thing Madame Lefevre was alluding. I didn't know of the evil against which she warned me. I learned quickly, however. And on this occasion she added: "There's Mary Call — you noted her wrists — well — she's a sweet girl — but leave her alone."

But my financial straits kept my mind pretty much on getting work. I was not looking for girls. The next morning I saw an advertisement asking for a printer. I went to the place a few blocks distant from the boarding house, a building standing in the fierce heat of the sun, amid railroad tracks, noise, dust, smoke. I applied for the place and was hired. And my board at last was now assured.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE first day at the type cases was one of torture. The heat was stifling; the smells sickening. At about eleven o'clock I realized that my throat was caked with thirst. I went to the water bucket, dipped up a cup, but only to find it full of flocculent stuff, feathery splinters. I tasted it before I fully realized what I was drinking. It was warm as summer rain. Accordingly I put on my hat, started down the stairs to go out and cross the street. "Say, where are you going?" shouted the foreman. "For a beer." "Beer, well that's a hell of a note; you're working, don't you know it? Come back to work or quit."

I was not used to violent commands of this sort. But in a flash I called to mind my predicament; I had to pay my board. So I returned to the type cases. The foreman now began to watch me. "You don't seem to get much done." That was true; but I didn't know where to find the different types. I had to inquire my way every step. "I'm just learning your cases," I said. "Well, you've got to speed up." At noon I joined some others going to a saloon for a beer to drink with lunch. I quenched my thirst at last. The foreman had spoken to me that morning about joining the union. I had to attend to that, being given a limited time for admission, working on sufferance in the interval.

So it went day by day until Saturday. I was expecting my pay; but the men were paid every two weeks. I had to go to Uncle Harvey and explain the circumstances. Aunt Letitia came to me, saying: "They don't pay you every week, do they?" "No," I said. I looked up. The sister

and the mother were standing near to hear Aunt Letitia dun me in this delicate fashion. Their faces looked like oval pieces of wood, with gimlet holes bored for eyes. The next Saturday I was paid; and I settled my board bill. I had left \$5.00 of my wages; and Billy Phelan came along again to take me forth into the city.

Under his guidance I had bought the right sort of a neck-tie, and the style of collar then in fashion. The season was late, and straw hats were cheap. So I got one. All together my appearance was changed. Lillian McFee said, "Ain't you the swell!" And Madame Lefevre assured me: "Don't let them tease you. You will be *à la mode* fast enough. I can see that." She was on the steps again, as we started, and called out, "Take good care of him, Billy." "Oh, yes," he called back; and we were off.

"I haven't but a few dollars," I said to Billy; "and that must last me two weeks." "Well," he said, "you make about \$9.00 a week setting type, and I make \$15.00 a week keeping books. I'm thirty-five, and you're not twenty-five. I'll never be any better off; but I hope to God you will. Damned if I don't get blue sometimes. I work where men get seven, ten, fifteen thousand a year. They come in to the cashier and say, 'Give me a hundred.' Off they go to the races. And there I am copying bills into books. It's tough; and I hit up the drink sometimes to forget. And once in a while I make a stake on the races. I made \$75.00 this morning. Thompson gave me the tip; try your luck with him some time. Put up a dollar and maybe make a hundred on a hundred to one shot. Here's ten dollars, I lend you; pay me when you can."

I took it reluctantly; but we were off for dinner and to see the town, and I wanted to do my share. We went to a German restaurant downtown, where Billy seemed to be kind of a king. He ordered a steak, a salad, Rhine wine. The proprietor stood by talking to him, we feasted, and I was in fine spirits. "I love this," I said, "this place — an Auerbach's cellar ——"

"Don't let Max hear you call it that."

"Why?"

"A cellar?"

"Yes, but Auerbach's cellar — why ——"

"Here, Max! The kid here calls your place Auerbach's cellar."

"Ach! Haben Sie Goethe gelesen?"

"Ja!"

"He's all right. Auerbach's cellar — that's a good name!"

"I love this wine," I said. "How glad I am I came to the city."

"Oh, yes," said Billy. "It's all right at first; and then the plating gets worn off you. This is a great hopper for men. They feed young fellows in, and turn out dollars. I wish you luck. I hope you don't get ground to sausage."

We went out and visited the gambling places. Billy began to play. In a few minutes he was cleaned out. I had shared the expense of the dinner, and had in all \$12.00 in my pocket. I loaned him \$5.00, stepped to the roulette table and bought \$5.00 worth of chips. I had been studying the game as a veteran was playing it. I placed my chips on three numbers he had been playing. I won. I tried again. I won. I tried again; and won again. Billy stood by in amazement. I had won \$60.00 in all. That seemed enough. I turned away. But a chuck-a-luck table allured me. I played this and won \$20.00. I gave this to Billy. I was now a gambler; and I could see no wrong in it. The men who followed it were wolfish looking, hard and gray. At the same time what is wrong about playing for money? I had heard much in Marshalltown of the sin and vice of gambling. Tecumseh Lindsay was forever berating gamblers. Various revivalists had preached against gambling in Marshalltown, excoriating the unknown men who sneaked a game of cards in a back room. Here I had seen it in all its glory; in ivory, in nickel, in green baize, in carved walnut; and with men of substance and standing for devotees; and I could see no necessary wrong about it.

Billy soon began to drink from place to place as we went along. The street got darker. I heard the sound of pianos, saw red transoms over the doors. Billy went ahead to the door of a seeming residence. He rang the bell. A colored maid opened and we walked in. We were immediately surrounded by girls thinly dressed, in slippers and silk stockings, their faces painted. They said, "Hello, Billy — buy a drink." And Billy did. Two of these mad creatures came to me, tried to sit on my lap. I edged away. "What's the matter of your friend, Billy?" "He's all right." "Fresh from the farm," said a girl. My new necktie had not deceived her. "What's your name?" another asked. "Willis Aronkeil," I replied. "Hey! Gladys, did you hear that — his name is Willis Aronkeil." "What do they call you, Willie, or Airy?" "Are you coming upstairs?" "What's up there?" I asked. "I will be as soon as you are." "I can see you here — all I want to." "Don't get fresh." "Buy some cigarettes." "Billy your friend is a crab — a tight-wad." "How much are cigarettes?" "A dollar a box." "Here's the dollar," I said. "Comin' upstairs?" "No, I'm goin' outdoors," and I started. Billy paid for the beer and came after me. "That's a poor place. I'll show you something fine." We went along a few blocks and entered a large house. Here it was quiet, an air of elegance about the entrance. There were paintings and statuary in the hallway. We passed into a drawing-room. Heavy rugs were on the polished floor, the scent of Oriental incense in the air. A maid motioned us to seats and left. In a few moments two women entered. They were regally gowned. Their arms and breasts generously exposed were white to a kind of shimmer. Their hair was coifed with the utmost art. One of these girls came to me, the other went to Billy. Pretty soon the maid reëntered, spoke to Billy, went out, returned with a bottle of wine and glasses. We drank, talked quietly all together at times, then each to his girl.

My girl said: "Would you like to see the ball room and

the Turkish room?" We walked through the rooms, which were empty. We sat first in the Turkish room. It seemed to me a marvel of carving. We were sunk in heavy pillows side by side. A swinging light cast a ruddy glow over the room. The incense was more sensuous here, more tangible. I was glancing around the room. Between the portières I saw two eyes, like python eyes. They belonged to a huge old woman, who was covered with diamonds, — a barbaric stomacher, sunbursts, earrings. She gazed intently at us for a moment; then she was gone. "You are an interesting boy," said my girl. "Are you fond of women?" "Yes," I said. She touched my hand with hers. "Why don't you kiss me?" She was very lovely, at least in this light; but I couldn't kiss her. What should I say? I invented a lie. "I can't." "Why not?" "Well, I'm engaged to be married." "What are you doing here?" "I've just come with my friend." "Come, dear, you're not telling the truth; if you don't like me just say so; there are ever so many girls here. Shall I send for another?" "No, I like you." "Buy me some wine." "All right." She rang and I bought a bottle of wine.

We went into the ball room. Marbles of naked dancers, fauns, muses were on pedestals here, grouped around a cataract fountain by the wall. In one corner were a harp and a piano. "How would you like some music?" The wine was swimming in my head. "I'd like it," I said. She rang and two negro players entered; and they played "Loin du Bal," "The Wedding of the Wind," "Echoes from the Ball Room," voluptuous expressions of romantic or carnal dreams. "Do you like that?" "Yes, very much." She touched my hand again. "Do you wish to see me in my room?" I was carrying Winifred's picture in a silver case in my pocket, near my heart. I could feel it against my body; my mind turned to the picture; my heart felt its presence. I said to my girl: "I haven't time: my friend is waiting for me." The music stopped. One of the musicians was standing in front of me in a demanding attitude. "Fifteen

dollars," he said. "Fifteen dollars!" I echoed. "For what?" "The music." Just then I saw the python eyes again. The head of the python beckoned to my girl. She got up and stole from the room. "The money, please," said the musician. "But you only played three pieces," I protested. "I have no time to argue—fifteen dollars or I'll take it out of you." "No, you won't," I said. He struck me, knocking me off my chair. I got up and knocked him down. In a moment there was an uproar. The python entered; another man; and before I knew it I was bundled into the street bleeding at the nose. I found a policeman and told him my story. "Where do you live, young fellow?" he asked. "On the South Side," I answered. "That's a big side — big enough for you to find and find it quick. If you don't I'll run you in."

But where was Billy? Had he gone on? I couldn't return to find him. So I went my way, arriving home at one in the morning a little dizzy, a little bruised!

CHAPTER XXIX

It was Sunday and every one was sleeping. Billy had not come home. Madame Lefevre seemed anxious to detach me from other ears, in order to ask me about the night before. She did at last, and I told her all. "Have you nothing more to tell me?" "Not a thing." "Oh! I am so glad; but what good did it do you to see such things?"

I was growing heartier every day now. My mind did not brood so much. The excitement of the city left no energies to fall back into my being half used. I felt more masculine, more powerful. I digested my food better. But I felt myself growing harder. Whenever I thought of my disappointments my growing indifference shed them off with a rattle, like toy arrows glancing from crockery, and I was gradually getting into the ways of the town.

Madame Lefevre and I spent many evenings together on the porch, or walking. We read at times in French, "Mademoiselle de Maupin," or Bourget, or Maupassant, her favorite author. One Sunday afternoon we were reading. As before she sat back of me, prompting me. We were reading of the interview between Mademoiselle and D'Albert, where she is still dressed as a page, but D'Albert senses her sex. Madame Lefevre moved her head, apparently to follow the lines. Her cheek touched mine. She uttered a quick and passionate sigh. I turned around. Her arms were stretched tensely in her lap. She was looking down. She arose, saying, "The room is stifling! What time is it? Oh, let's walk!"

We went up and down the avenue of the millionaires; then

turned closer to the lake. We paused for a moment looking at the statue commemorating the Ft. Dearborn massacre; then we leaned against the wall, looked over the lake. "It is beautiful, isn't it? This city has the finest water front of any city in the world. But they make worse use of it than Genoa does of hers."

After a silence Madame Lefevre said, "Skit, have you ever been in love?" "No," I said. "Then you do not know. I have. I loved my husband. I can never love again. He has now been dead five years; yet I feel as much married to him as I did in life; I give him the same loyalty, too. It is very hard, too, to live alone. I work very hard for my living." "Tell me." "Oh, the caring for the sick is dreadful. The last case I had was a typhoid, and it almost wore me out. That is why I have taken such a long vacation. But I'm going back to duty in a few days."

We walked about till dark. And Madame Lefevre said: "I'll go on: you come later. For that Lillian McFee is always about, and I don't like her stares, her sneers."

We separated. Madame Lefevre went directly home. I walked far south, dropped in at a little restaurant, ate, and walked home, arriving about eight o'clock. Madame Lefevre was sitting on the porch with Mr. and Mrs. Thompson. Lillian McFee was away, and for the night, it seemed.

Billy Phelan had been on another spree. He had come home while we were out, and was up in his room now, moaning. I went to him. "Gee! Skeet, but I'm sick." "Well, why do you drink so much? Why don't you take a little and stop?" "Oh yes, you say that; just keep hitting the booze, and you'll know why. You'll be in this fix, too, cut it out—quit." I had no idea of doing so. I was sure I could be temperate with drink, as I was with food. "Help me out a little, Skeet!" "Do you want any supper?"

"No, just stick around a little." I did; but I went downstairs for a few minutes. He called and I went back to him. At about nine I had him settled for the night; so I went to my room and retired. No sooner was I in bed than he began

to call me. I determined not to go to him. He called, and called. I rolled over, composing myself to sleep. Then he was still; but presently there was a knock on my door.

I said, "Yes." There was no answering voice. A clock in a saloon back of my window struck eleven. I had been in bed longer than I had supposed. Again the knock. A little louder. "Who is it?" I asked. I was sure it was Billy — and yet. The knock was louder. I got up, opened the door. Before me was a figure in white, the darkness misty about her, from the radiation of the white apparel. I put out my hand to touch the shoulder, the arms of my unknown visitor. It was Madame Lefevre!

And it was curious the next morning to find at my breakfast plate a letter from my father telling me of Will Morley's public confession of faith and sin in the church at Marshalltown. His letter read:

"Dear Skeet: Hope everything is going well with you. Did you see Burke Gray yet? What are you doing anyway? Your mother is busy over her Texas land; she thinks that there is oil on it. Myrtle is away visiting. Davis is again in school — trying to go in the A class. Take good care of yourself and write me. I am busy but with a lot of little things; and I get weary.

"Your father,

"H. K.

"P.S. Last Sunday Will Morley confessed his sin in church and joined. Thus ends Lord Byron!"

Thus ends Lord Byron! And thinking of the circumstances of last night I found myself repeating the last stanza of "Don Juan":

"The ghost, if ghost it were, seemed a sweet soul
As ever lurked beneath a holy hood;
A dimpled chin, a neck of ivory, stole
Forth into something much like flesh and blood.

Back fell the sable frock and dreary cowl,
And they revealed (alas! that e'er they should)
In full, voluptuous, but *not o'er grown* bulk
The phantom of her frolic Grace — Fitz-Fulke!"

For was not Lord Byron beginning with me? And I
didn't look like him, or wish to be like him.

CHAPTER XXX

NEXT morning at the type case it came over me more strongly than ever that I must get away from Uncle Harvey's. The air about the house was mephitic as of a stew. I loathed Lillian McFee. To be caretaker of Billy Phelan, and to be called by him in the night in his drunken megrims filled me with a feeling of degradation. The Thompsons were fleshly, vulgar; they grated upon me. And now there was Madame Lefevre. What would I do with her? Was I to be forced into a marriage with her? She was ten years my senior; but so much the worse for me in my struggle to keep my independence. I had already made up my mind never to marry. And now was I close to the trap?

Then here was my uncongenial and laborious work, with long hours, in offensive surroundings. I was telephoning now and then to learn if Burke Gray or George Higgins had returned to the city. I could get on the newspaper under Mr. Holt, if George Higgins said it was the thing. And I felt I must get away from the printing office and at once. It was plainly a case of circumstance what I should next do. If I saw Burke Gray first I would embark in the law; at least for a time. And if I saw George Higgins first I might commence a career as a news writer and for good. So I telephoned again, but both Burke Gray and George Higgins were still away.

I went home that night weary and discouraged. After dinner Madame Lefevre came to me at the first opportunity and said: "Meet me by the drug store, on 22d and State, at eight o'clock. I must see you." Her manner was

serious, almost tragic. I said, "All right." She went to her room, came out with her hat on, and walked down the street. Lillian McFee was on the porch with Billy Phelan as I came out. "There goes your girl," said Lillian. "What girl?" I asked. "Come, purest innocence! How do you expect a lovesick widow like that not to have her feelings show? She's mad about you. And you know it." "Nonsense," I said with a sort of thrill of fear passing through my throat.

I started down the steps. "She went this way," said Lillian. "Hurry, you can catch her." "I don't want to catch her," I said as I crossed the street and entered the hotel. I bought a cigar, came out of the hotel on 22d Street, walked east, turned south, making a detour of several blocks. I arrived late at the place of meeting. Madame Lefevre was walking to and fro in an evident state of nerves. As soon as she saw me her face brightened a little. She said, "Come with me." The evening heat was heavy. The air was full of dust and smells; the cars rattled so loudly that we could hear each other only in the intervals of their passing. But Madame Lefevre was saying: "What have I done! Oh what have I done! I have dishonored my husband's memory: I have failed; I have been disloyal. Oh, what have I done!" The tears were oozing out of her eyes. And we went on, I knew not whither, through this noisome, feculent part of the city. I followed without will, seeming under a compulsion to humor her, to be with her in her distress. We came to a church at last. "Come," said Madame Lefevre. And we entered. We were the only penitents. Statues on the way of the cross stood around the wall. The altar with its brass and white enamel shone through the twilight. Madame Lefevre knelt in one of the seats, and began to sob. She whispered to me, "You must pray—pray, Skit, pray for me, for yourself." "I can't," I said. "Oh, you must—just pray, Skit." And I tried; but here I was in my habitual mood of detachment. I stood aloof from what had happened as if I had not been a participant in it. Contemplated, I

could not see any wrong in it. I only felt that I had forgotten Winifred for the time. But what was Winifred? A memory alone — a thought, a piece of hushed music, the vanished fragrance of a dead flower. Nowhere could I step upon a rock of tangible reason. And Madame Lefevre prayed and sobbed. There was I kneeling beside her, trying to pray to comfort her, as I had tried often to do or to be something to please another's mind or heart; but my heart was far from it. We arose at last, and she said: "I must come to confession to-morrow. Promise me, Skit, that you will not read with me, come near me. Be kind to me — speak to me; but do not come near me. Do you promise?" "Yes." "Now we must go home separately."

We parted at the church. I walked along slowly, finding that we had come to the vice district which Billy Phelan and I had visited together. This church was set in its midst. And here in symbol Madame Lefevre had come!

CHAPTER XXXI

ONE morning as I had just fairly started at work one of the compositors came to me and said: "Put down your stick, get your hat and coat and come." "Where?" I said. "Well the rest of us are going to Tony Baer's for a drink — you can go where you like, so long as you go." I couldn't conceive what was the matter. As I hesitated he said, "We've struck." "Struck?" I said. "Well, I haven't." "You haven't. Well if you want your head knocked off stick here a few minutes and you'll get it."

There was a scuffle at the door. Some policemen entered. The proprietor was caught in a whirl of angry printers. Others came up to me. I got off my stool, put my stick down. I was herded into the crowd of strikers, hustled out with the rest. Policemen took possession of the shop. Outside, policemen were on the watch for violence or disorder.

I went to the cashier to get my money, resolving to leave for good, now that fate had severed my relation with the job for the time, and for how long I could not say. The cashier said: "Your money? Well, you'll be a hell of a time getting it, having struck." "I'll sue you," I said. "Oh, that's nothing. We keep lawyers by the year. Suits don't bother us."

I had just a few dollars in my pocket. It was Thursday and I owed my board on Saturday. What should I do? I got on a street car and went to see George Higgins. He had not returned. I sought Mr. Holt out again. "Have you seen George Higgins?" he asked. "No." "Well, you know what I said. See him, I'm not going to give

you a job until you see him, and he says I misadvised him by directing him into the law." I went away to see Burke Gray.

He was in, but I had to pass secretaries. I was admitted. I stood by a great table piled with papers and law books. On the other side of it sat Burke Gray, weasel-eyed, rat-haired, of immobile face, even voice. He did not take my hand. He acted as if he knew my mission; that I was one of many who came to him; that there was some way to do my father the respect of seeing me for a moment, and then being done with it. No friendship between my father and him warmed him into cordiality, expansive converse, generous advice. "You made a mistake," he said, "by coming to the city." He laid my father's letter down. "You should have stayed in the country until you became a thorough practitioner, anyway. Here lawyers are specialists, business men, detectives, — not often lawyers. I have no place for you here. My son is just out of Harvard. He's coming back from a fishing trip in a few days to take a place here — the only place — and that's really made for him."

He touched a button. A girl entered with her stenographic book and pencil. Mr. Gray dictated, not changing the inflection of his voice, his face impassive as before :

"Dear Judge Harrison: This will introduce to you Mr. Arthur Kirby, the son of our mutual friend of Marshalltown. I send him to you thinking that you will not be trespassed upon by that fact. But I have no place for him; and while I do not suppose that you have, your relation to the bar association may give you knowledge of opportunities which I do not know about. He is already licensed to practice. Trusting that you will do what you can, I remain,

"Sincerely yours,"

While the stenographer was writing this I sat in silence; for Mr. Gray turned to his papers, occasionally picking up his cigar to puff it softly. The girl came back. He signed the letter, put it in an envelope, and said, "Judge Harrison

knows your father. Go and see him, and good luck." I thanked him and went my way.

But in coming to the number to which the letter was addressed I saw "J. Steele & Co." on the big window — no Judge Harrison. Nevertheless I entered, found that the place was a bank. I went to the cashier's window and was directed to a door that was back of the partitions, counters, and gratings. I turned a corner in the corridor, and passed through a door into a room not larger than ten feet square. And there before a roll-top desk sat an elderly man, quite bald, his spectacles on the end of his nose, absorbed in the study of a law book. He looked up, and said "Well." I handed him Burke Gray's letter, standing as he read it. "Sit down," he said. He smiled, began to talk about my father, about their meetings in the country, in the courts, in various places. He told me stories. He said what Burke Gray had said, "You should have stayed in the country. The city is a bad place to make a lawyer." As we were talking, voices became strident, violent, in the main room. I heard the word "Thief, usurer," and in a moment a large man, dark, thick-lipped, sensual, greedy, entered where we sat. He turned out to be J. Steele. "What about selling Cohen's collateral? He is here raising a row, threatening an injunction. What about selling it before he can get to court?" "Yes," said Judge Harrison, "sell it." J. Steele hurried out of the room. Judge Harrison resumed the telling of stories. He was amiable, smiling. And at last he said: "Can you try justice cases?" "Yes," I said, though I never had. "Well, I'll tell you, I have a mind to try you on. But here's a warning; the last collector we had here stole \$1000 and ran away. If Mr. Steele could catch him, he'd jail him. But if you do anything of the kind, you needn't expect to escape." "If you think I'm that kind, I don't want the job — I wouldn't take it." "Come," said Judge Harrison with a loud laugh, "I was talking, but it is a responsible thing to go around collecting money. That's what you'll have to do; collect notes, and sometimes try a justice case; and watch

my cases in court, and go to court with me sometimes when I go. I think you'll do. Your father is a good lawyer, and you look like him, I'll try you on; but the pay isn't much; that is, at the start." "How much?" "Fifty dollars a month." "I'll work for that," I said. The hours were much shorter than at the printing office, and the pay a third more. Perhaps this was advancement in the world. "All right, come down to-morrow. Be here promptly at nine. I'll have some notes to send you out with. You can go to the Fidelity Company and apply for a bond. We'll pay the premium; and you can go to work."

And so the law had me at last!

CHAPTER XXXII

THE first thing I had to do was to go to court with Judge Harrison. Barney Cohen had applied for an injunction to prevent the sale of his collateral. I saw the game played with the finest chicanery. Judge Harrison tried to have the hearing postponed, urging other engagements. The court refused to postpone it. Accordingly the matter was argued. Judge Harrison read many books, reviewed every point, consumed hours of time. Meanwhile J. Steele entered and whispered to Judge Harrison that the sale had been made. Nevertheless Judge Harrison went on with the argument, as if the injunction were a dreaded thing, still reading books, still arguing. At last the case was submitted. The court granted an injunction, but it was too late. Barney Cohen had lost his collateral. The injunction was futile.

This was the sort of thing that happened daily at J. Steele & Co. And this was the work that Judge Harrison lent himself to ; a kindly man, a man who had had standing and honor in the profession, who had been a judge himself. And I went about over the town day by day collecting usurious notes, submitting to curses which I took vicariously for the scoundrel who had hired me. In the justice courts I wrangled, argued, lied, dogged, came to blows sometimes with opposing lawyers — and all for \$50.00 a month. Where was Parnassus? Where Winifred? Where Homer, and Plato, Goethe and Cervantes? Where my dreams, my aspiration? Hate filled my heart, and suspicion, and hardness, and injustice, and ferocious zeal to do the work assigned me — and for \$50.00 a month. But I was heartier every day ; I felt like a young bull, with lowered head ready at any time to charge. I ate with zest ; I drank beer ; I played

the races a little; I went to theaters and concert halls; I familiarized myself with every part of the town; I bought suits and hats, and became a habitué of streets and restaurants dressed in the manner of the city. I pleased Judge Harrison by my industry and finesse. My salary was raised to \$75.00 a month. And all the while there was Madame Lefevre.

She had gone to confessional, but she had forgotten that she went; or she seared her conscience about going or remembering. We read together, walked together. I took her to the theater. And though Lillian McFee jeered at her, Madame Lefevre began to bristle in her own defense. And soon that was settled. Madame Lefevre had a friend, another nurse, who kept an apartment of her own. As she was frequently on duty, we went to this apartment, where Madame Lefevre cooked meals for me, and where we visited to our hearts' content.

For these feasts Madame Lefevre required me to bring wine. I noticed that she drank rather copiously; when I first knew her she was a total abstainer. But she had developed moods, and when we would arrive at the apartment she would say: "I'm a little down; a glass of wine will refresh me." After drinking she would become gay, almost abandoned, and amorously spirited and laughing. It was understood at the boarding house that Madame Lefevre's husband had left her a few thousand dollars, to which she had added by frugality and industry. It seemed to occur to her now that she did not have to work. Accordingly she began to refuse assignments; and if we were able to meet at the apartment nothing was allowed on her part to interfere with it.

On one of these meetings she sat upon my knees, her arms around me, and began in this way: "You are a strange boy-man, so young, so old, so good, so bad, so hard, so tender. I don't believe you could love any one, could you?" Unprepared for the sequence I said, "Yes." "Why don't you love me then? And you don't. I can see by your eyes that you don't." "Well, but I have got into a state where

"I can't love anyone." "Why? What is it?" "Just a state." "I know you love some one now." "No." "You have loved some one." "Yes." She began to cry. "Well, so have I — I loved my husband, I love his memory — and yet — just look! Skit! listen, I am older than you, yet it makes no difference. I would make you a wonderful wife. I know so well how to take care of a man. And look, we would have books together too — we would be happy. Ah! just look! Here I have proven disloyal to my husband's memory whom I loved with all my heart. I would marry you too. And here you can't care for me, because you loved some one. Oh! what have I come to? Can it be I who have come to this?"

I tried to change the subject. I went to look after the drinks. I poured her more wine; and so it would be she would forget, become gay again. But we frequently returned to these themes.

And the winter went into the spring. Meantime I had met George Higgins. He had seen Mr. Holt, and knew I was on my way to him. He greeted me just as if he had always known me, smiling expansively, showing large butternut teeth. He invited me to his house; and there I met his mother, a sweet-faced, inspired spirit who had translated the "*Æneid*." She read me her rendition of the fifth book, and we talked of the classics. J. Steele & Co. had almost dusted over all that I had loved and read. But it revived instantly; and I began to look upon myself as one who had discarded his birthright and dishonored his hopes. Thus it is that we change, and turn away from what has filled our soul with recreating interests and constant delight. George took me at once for his closest friend. He had followed me as Willis Aronkeil in the newspapers. He had pasted in his scrapbook some of my verses. How strange to come in contact with this devotion bestowed upon me, while I was a stranger in an unknown life, far away from him! And he said: "Mr. Holt advised you right. Look at him. He's 65 and the managing editor: but what of it?"

The thing is to have something to do that keeps you independent. Then you can write what you choose. And I've always found that I had leisure enough. I have published two books, and have three more in manuscript."

I told George of J. Steele & Co.; and he laughed immoderately. "Why, he's the biggest scoundrel in town. His place is a lion's den. And to think of you there! Apollo among the wolves — Orpheus with Pluto!"

My pride was touched a little. I knew my hard side. I knew my will, my pugnacity; George did not. "I get along all right," I said. Still I was suffering tortures every day. "What I would like," I said, "would be to get into a law office; be a legitimate lawyer, since I must do this, and can't escape it." "Say," said George, "I believe I have something for you. I know a man named Patrick Dorsey. He's the most tireless worker, the most energetic business getter you ever saw. And he needs you. You'd just fit in with him. For you know the law; I can see that. I'll see Pat about you. I heard he was going to open an office of his own. He's been working for a big firm here."

"Will you do that, George?" "Of course I will." "I'd love that. I might make some money." "Yes, you'd make money." "And I believe I could pull some business. I know Barney Cohen. He's my friend. He's had trouble with J. Steele; and to tell you the truth I've helped Barney all I could, for J. Steele just wolfed him. He has all kinds of things to do. Say, see Mr. Dorsey right away." "Yes, as soon as I can."

George's mother was planning to go to California, and that left him without a home. I was anxious to get away from Uncle Harvey's. George proposed that we get an apartment together, as his mother had rented the house. Above everything Madame Lefevre was becoming a subject of anxiety with me. She had almost given up work. She was taking too much to stimulant. And one day as I stood at the front window of Uncle Harvey's, Lillian McFee came to my side. "Just stand here a minute, Skeet!" I did.

The front door closed; and quickly I saw Madame Lefevre walk off with a middle-aged man. "You're losing your sweetheart," said Lillian. "Who is that?" I asked, something of a regret, if not a jealousy entering my heart. "That's Dr. Green," said Lillian, "a quack and a rogue. When he gets through with Madame, she won't have any money left and no reputation either." "Why does she go about with him?" "He's treating her — yes — treating her." And Lillian cackled and turned away.

Well, I was not to be at much trouble in being rid of Madame, if that was my wish, all stories of drummers and mediocre gallants to the contrary. They say that you can't loose a woman's clutch upon you! And yet a sadness came over me. Madame Lefevre had been a sweet spirit. What was she becoming now? It was clear that Madame Lefevre was losing her self-control, forgetting her womanhood — and I was the occasion, if not the cause.

CHAPTER XXXIII

WE went to see Patrick Dorsey at last. He greeted George as an old and beloved friend. He looked at me much as a chicken looks at a snake, in wonder, if not in fear. He was a large man, with almost black eyes, and a voice of deep, orotund tone, that had cadences of shriller, wailing qualities at the end of sentences. Generosity was one of his evident traits.

George made me out a marvel of learning in the technicalities of practice, emphasizing that I had mastered the art of pleading, that part of the law which relates to stating with conciseness and logic the facts in legal papers like declarations, rejoinders, replications. Dorsey looked at me as if he didn't believe George; that no human being had ever become proficient in this art; yet he said he needed an associate to take things of this sort off his hands, so that he could be free to attend to his advocacy and the larger matters. We struck a bargain on the basis of our several accomplishments; and I closed up with J. Steele & Co. and made ready to join Mr. Dorsey in a new office, with desks and furniture all new, and books all new, since neither of us owned a thing. I sent word to Barney Cohen that I was opening a law office. And I began to look about to get into new quarters and leave Uncle Harvey's. That was a played-out experience with me too.

George and I began to search for an apartment. He wanted to try the south part of town. We looked here and found an apartment, but it was really too large. It had eight rooms, a dining room overlooking 25th Street, front windows on the boulevard. It had baths in plenty, and handsome

gas grates. It was quite the thing all in all; and the price was only a little beyond what we wished to pay. We left the agent to understand that we were likely renters and would return. "If we could only find a third man, acceptable to both of us," said George.

The last day I worked for J. Steele & Co. I went for the twentieth time to see Gustav Lenke, a maker of violins, who had become hopelessly entangled in the toils of J. Steele. He was a sunny-faced old German, kindly and improvident, always in debt, but ever hopeful. And he was always promising to pay; but no less saying, "Gemini! I've paid this note twice over in interest"; and he brought forth his checks to prove it to me. I had such a compassion for the old man and such contempt for the rapacious boa-constrictor for whom I was using my talents, that on this occasion I tore the note into bits and flung them in the gutter. When I did report on the note I told Judge Harrison that I had lost it. But I was then with Dorsey, safely and fully paid by J. Steele, and beyond penalization.

In the midst of these things mother and Myrtle came to town and took a suite at the finest hotel. The word came to me by telephone at J. Steele & Co. I was invited to luncheon. Myrtle was very beautiful, very vivacious and brilliant, and she was dressed like a princess. Where was the money coming from? The rooms were full of flowers; bell boys were entering with packages and notes; the telephone was ringing. My mother was master of ceremonies in the performance in which Myrtle was the central character: all except my mother seemed to be the star in business consultations being held. The banker from Marshalltown, Mr. Tracy, always my father's enemy, was in town too. He was in attendance upon mother's interests and conferences. For the secret was this: A company had been organized and financed to bore for oil on the forty acres in Texas that Aunt Joana had bequeathed mother. Mr. Tracy had brought my mother in contact with Chicago capital, and was advising her step by step.

We were joined at luncheon by Roger Farnsworth, in every way the handsomest cavalier of my whole acquaintance with men. Myrtle had met and known him in the East. Though I was not in his sphere as a liver or a spender, and though our experience had been totally different, his in the East, mine in the West, his among people of fashion and wealth, mine among the middle classes in a country town — in spite of all these disparities I could see that he took an instant fancy to me. It cropped out in the conversation that he did not like his hotel; that he did not know what to do, having come to Chicago for an indefinite stay. I ventured to tell him of my plan to take an apartment; and as I liked him I offered him the third place that George and I had open in the apartment at the "Traymore." Myrtle looked at me as if I were suggesting a loan of ten dollars from the King of England. But Roger was all interest, wanted to know when he could see me, and when he could see the apartment. We made an appointment on the spot; and I brought George along. We rented the apartment; and thus quickly did my business and abiding circumstances change.

Not long before this, one morning at breakfast I had remonstrated delicately with Madame Lefevre about Dr. Green. I had seen his face and studied it. His eyes were languorous and hunted. His color purplish. His whole manner furtive. I had fears for Madame Lefevre. But also I was fond of her; I felt that she was somewhat in my life. She resented my remonstrance with more spirit than I had anticipated. "What is it to you, Skit, what I do?" "A good deal," I said. "Pooh! you just talk. You don't want me even if I wanted you." After that I did not meet her at her friend's apartment. And when I came to leave Uncle Harvey's she was not in sight. I could only ask that my good-by be sent to her. Uncle Harvey stood at the door more drooped and subdued than when I came; while Aunt Letitia, her sister and mother, with their round faces and gimlet eyes, waved me off, saying that I was a dear, and that they wished me good luck.

I had written my father in a self-gratulatory tone of the

association which I had made with Mr. Dorsey. A letter came back from him in these words :

"My dear Son : With a view of ultimately practicing law I am glad you have gone in with Mr. Dorsey, and at \$50.00 a month, with the privilege on your part of doing what you can independently after you have served him. I see this trouble with the arrangement : Mr. Dorsey when he is paying you a salary is justly entitled to your time and services, and I am fearful that should you get business, it would cause a friction, certainly would unless you have a clear understanding. Yes, I would go to the law and very largely I would drop letters. Your general book learning in the literary field is greatly above the average and more extended than the ordinary graduate of Yale. Of course money is what we all require ; and if you only make \$50 a month you can live on that for a time ; and in the meantime you will be placing yourself in the line of your life work, and soon will be making a competence. Gain a reputation for sound judgment and probity, which is worth more in the great commercial world than to enjoy the distinction of an eloquent advocate. That's what I am called. It has brought me friends and a certain place in my part of the state ; but I am not very prosperous even yet. And I am glad that you have no gift as a speaker or an advocate. It may be the making of you that you haven't. Be accurate, prompt, reliable, and concentrate on the rights of property, instead of the rights of persons, as I have. Exercise, retire early, don't run about the city ; and don't get married ; and on the other hand be careful, you know. Pretty soon, I trust, Mr. Dorsey will offer you a partnership, and you will be fixed.

"Your mother is all wrought up about finding oil. She has really raised some money. I am sending Davis to a Harvard preparatory school. This leaves me much alone. I sleep at the house and eat at the restaurant. How is Uncle Harvey ?

"Your father,
"H. K.

"P.S. I'm glad you're out of J. Steele & Co. Judge Harrison is an old slicker. I knew him of old. A letter came here for you from some woman in Chicago. I have mislaid it; but will send it when it turns up."

My father had touched the threads that wove a rotten spot in the fabric of my association with Mr. Dorsey, when he wrote that he saw a danger in the arrangement which gave me a salary for services, yet permitted me to do what I could for myself. It is the old story of a knot in the board, a blow-hole in the steel, a gash in the tree. But in so many ways my father had misread the case, and me. Time proved it. But that belongs to my tale; and I go on.

The "Traymore" was a building losing in standing; but it was yet tenanted by some excellent people. It had rather become the abode of bachelors. The manager was an easy soul who winked at privileges. And he was often in the buffet which adjoined the "Traymore," with the gay blades who made a drinking bout of every night. George liked Roger, and we were soon settled, with a colored maid to serve breakfast. And as Roger had nothing to do he ran the apartment in so far as marketing and overlooking the maid required a management. Our neighbor across the hall was Thad Hilburn, who, George said, was a rich gambler. We never saw him. His name was not on the door. But sometimes I met Mrs. Hilburn at the elevator, a blue-eyed, golden-haired woman, always beautifully gowned, always with a certain joy written on her face.

But as to Roger: All movements, travel and sojournings have some reason. Why was Roger here? Who was he? He soon gave me his confidence. He had engaged himself to a girl in Providence. He had passed her window one moonlight night when the sea was whispering. He had climbed a trellis into her room. And then, as he saw her afterward with other men, he became suspicious of her. I could see that the girl was desperately playing to hold Roger's interest, that the other men were used to keep alive Roger's attachment,

lest it die down in the circumstance that her complete dedication left nothing further for Roger to seek. This was the assurance that I gave him. But he had run away from her in an attempt to choke his passion, his love. And the girl was writing Roger the most piteous letters. She was in a desperate condition. Roger would read me these letters and weep. Then he would ask to be reassured. Then he would want to drink. And always I said to him: "Go back, marry her; you owe it to her, to yourself."

He had brought with him what seemed to me a vast sum of money just to spend, \$15,000. He had it in bonds, and when he ran out he sold a bond. He had a large wardrobe, a suit for every occasion; a dozen pairs of shoes, all kinds of satchels, bags, suitcases; a Swiss watch which struck the hours; walking sticks of every description. He was a marvel of elegance to me. He was rich in his own right; and the favorite of a rich grandmother. He had no business and no profession; and wanted none. And he spent his days at the millionaires' clubs. His evenings he liked to spend with me, and with George when George was at home. Often as I went through the buffet on my way to the apartment he would be there with the toss-pots. But never in my wildest days did I do more than join them for more than a drink or two. I was working; and whatever hour I retired, I scarcely ever failed to appear at the office at nine, ready for the day's work.

Roger, however, in his depression over his girl, often took to drink, and then he drank deeply. He grew morose, quarrelsome, when intoxicated. He would strike anyone who stood in his way. His master blood, his superior class feeling came out in ugly attitudes toward bartenders, restaurant keepers, waiters, any one who did not quickly do his bidding. But toward me he was never anything but deferential and friendly. Then when he was clothed in his right mind, he would dress himself and become the handsomest and most courtly man in the world; and he would go out to call on the daughters of his millionaire acquaintances of the clubs.

Often he took me; and thus I began to know Martha Fisk, the daughter of Henry Fisk, millionaire manufacturer. She was a little, pinch-faced woman of twenty-five, wore nose glasses through which her common-sense blue eyes looked emotionless at one. She wore modest gowns of gray silk, or silk striped of black and white. She was a little twisted, a little humped. She was demure to a degree. Her conversation was always of mediocre things. What did Roger see in her? Surely nothing. In fact he said he liked Mr. Fisk, who had been kind to him, had advised him wisely in some speculations, and he did the father the courtesy of calling on the daughter. Mr. Fisk plainly admired Roger; but as frequently was the case with me, I was a spectator at these calls, an unregarded quantity.

We were living happily at the apartment. We generally breakfasted together. George took me to the theater. We did the art institute together, and I found myself admiring Franz Hals, Rembrandt, Corot, Inness and some of the work of Botticelli. I met the local celebrities of the press through George, attended bear dinners given at their clubs, where their poems were read, improvisations were played, humorous stories were told. I was introduced; I was observed a little, but for the most part I passed as a shadow. I was still the watcher, the listener. And I found myself shy, and a little dumb in the presence of bright and brilliant spirits. George introduced me to his favorite books. Through him I knew Villon, Rabelais, and Swinburne. He was well versed in Shakespeare. Many of our evenings were great delights; and I found life growing richer and in different ways than I had ever known.

And I was making a competence for myself. But I could see my dreams departing. They beat their white wings around me sometimes, but soared away. And my life at Marshalltown grew more and more distant. And Winifred became more and more a dream of the past!

CHAPTER XXXIV

WHEN I could withdraw my energies to the contemplation of the fast changing spectacle of life, I saw it under so many different aspects and experiences. Here was something manifestly the product of myself, and of the selves of others projected into a medium, fused and made into something else. It came from me. But what was I? It came from Roger and George; but what were they? Also who was engineering this sequence of things, presiding over the operations of Heimarmenê? What had I really to do with meeting George Higgins, and having that made a link in consequences and other meetings? What had I to do with meeting Roger? How could I control the drama that inevitably ensued from knowing Roger? And why did my father, admirable as I thought him, yet have the faculty, and that alone, of bringing me into contact with persons who were a detriment to me, or at least of little use to me? Burke Gray led to Judge Harrison, Judge Harrison to J. Steele & Co.; and J. Steele & Co. to a spiritual experience that was what? Evil? Or a hardening of my life, as cool days solidify the soft kernels of the corn? Again Myrtle led to Roger, and Roger to — but that's to come. Except for John Armstrong, my father's friend, life had been totally different with me. If Aunt Joana had not married Uncle Harvey I should not have turned up at his boarding house. I should not have met Madame Lefevre; she would not have taken up with the quack, Dr. Green, and descended to poverty and grief. And I shouldn't have — but that's to come. For it was because of John Armstrong's visit to Chicago that I was led into suffering and change. So much

for Heimarmenê working through these different personalities to the making of me!

And now George entertained an intimate friend from St. Louis. It was none other than Bob Hayden of whom Winifred had written me long ago. That circuit was now complete. And he was all that Winifred had painted him. Even Roger, who knew little of books, and turned from people who liked them, sat enthralled with Bob Hayden's conversation. For it was concerned with the stuff of which books are made — life itself. And he had lived enormously. Hearing him made me wish to experience all things, so that I could know all things; even if I was used up in the experience. Bob touched upon this very thing one evening. "A man's a plant," he said, "with a certain inherent capacity to produce a given thing — color, scent, fruit. All right, stimulate your plant to achieve itself to the highest perfection. You exhaust the plant in the achievement. And with a man let him feed his nature in every way. He comes up to great wisdom, vision, and lo! like a plant he withers with the perfection of his experience. Like a lead pencil whittled to the finest point he snaps off. I have lived too much myself for everything except this final song or word."

These observations seemed directed to me; for I was living now; and George who was my senior by several years stood by, watching me with elation and smiles. Evidently he had told Bob of my adventures about the city.

And again Bob was talking in terms of Karma, of Hindu fatalism. "Now what's a man?" he said. "He's the product of an ovum and a spermatozoön. Nothing is in him that was not in them. Something has occurred in them because of their conjunction and maturation. His physical development, form, strength — all come from their substance and union. Nothing is in him physically that was not in them. Food and air only bring them to maturity; or if they add anything to them, still the three make the man. Well, how about his spirit? What is that but the intangible effluvium of the ovum and the spermatozoön and their ferment in union and

mixture? And so it is a man has so many cells, all coming from two cells, and can have no more. And he has so many spiritual cells and can have no more. Life is the result of these physical and spiritual cells deployed in a medium where physical and spiritual cells are working and moving according to their nature. One side of you may lie quiescent for not meeting this or the other person; but even that is your fate; and it can't be otherwise with you; on the other hand whatever you express as the result of human contacts that is fate too; and the results cannot be otherwise than they are with you and with them. So don't you see that while there may be little movements on the stream of life that seem to come from the exercise of individual wills, the whole is predetermined and cannot be otherwise?"

And so he talked, drinking many beers the while. And I could see that Roger was reflecting upon his own life; that he was trying to apply this philosophy to himself and to the girl he had abandoned.

Every day proved the truth of Bob Hayden's philosophy. For example, in the worldly matter of an evening dress! Roger had expressed surprise that I did not have one. But as yet I could scarcely afford it. Even now it pinched me to indulge that taste. But there was Barney Cohen for whom I was doing all sorts of little services in the law day by day. He was in touch with tailors, as one might suppose. I spoke to him about the suit, and he said, "Alla right! come with me. I want to talk to you anyway about getting a man out of the penitentiary for me." Yes, through J. Steele, I met Barney Cohen; through Roger I got the idea of an evening dress; and for the opportunity of getting one at a tailor's subservient to Barney Cohen, I paid in hiring myself in a case which cost me dear, and influenced my life profoundly. Nevertheless, I soon had the suit, and could wear it when I went with Roger to call, on Martha Fisk, for example. I had it too when I learned some months later from whom the letter came which my father had mislaid.

Father came to town now to see me. George was delighted

with him, with his extraordinary physical charm, with his vivacity, his racy anecdotes and sharp sallies. I was as proud of him as I had been as a boy. He looked powerful, masterful. I studied him in a bewildered way, wondering why it was that he had not become governor, or President; why it was he remained a country barrister. And now our lives came together in wonderful intimacy. We were close chums, talking of everything familiarly, feasting together, doing the town together. George was always eager to join us; and he introduced my father at the clubs, standing off in admiration after he had presented him to groups, as much as to say, "That's Skeeters' dad; isn't he a dandy?" But Roger took no stock in my father. To him he was a country lawyer and that alone. There was nothing in his spiritual cells that rose up to my father.

Well, why did I grow ill? — not very ill, but ill for a few days. Why did George happen to be out of town at the time? Why was Roger neglecting me, to devote his hours to a chorus girl he had met at the America?

One day near noon as I was lying rather weak, wondering what I should do for luncheon, there was a rap on my door. I staggered to respond, opened, and there stood Mrs. Hilburn with a tray of food. She was so fair, so fresh and healthy; her hair was so golden, her eyes so blue; her smile so tender. But her name was not Mrs. Hilburn, it was Julie Valentine. I had learned this. I had learned that she had left a husband to cast her life with Thad Hilburn, the gambler. And here she stood in a pretty house dress of blue silk, her white hands extending to me a tray of delicious food; fruit and toast, eggs and tea. "I heard you were sick and had no girl, and I brought this." "Oh, thank you! how good of you — how good!" "If you will go back to bed, I'll bring it to you; then when you finish you can set the tray in the hall, or have one of your friends do it." I wobbled back into my room and tucked myself in. Julie came with the tray, propped me up with pillows, put the tray on my lap. I took her hand and kissed it; and she smiled upon me and left.

Not wishing George or Roger to know that I had made the start of a friendship with Julie, I took the tray to the hall myself, placed it at Julie's door, and rapped. I did not wait for her to appear; but turned into my own apartment.

There was something about Julie that stirred me. Was it her maternal power? or her human qualities, her kindness, good-fellowship? At any rate I loved her flesh, its delicacy, color, its feel. I experienced infinite tenderness in touching her hands, stroking her golden hair. And as for me! Well, I was about twenty-five. She was about thirty-two, and Thad was over fifty. Yet she loved Thad. She had left her husband for Thad. She was devoted to Thad, keeping this home of theirs in the most immaculate way. And as for herself, everything about her was exquisite. Her person was as fragrant as a bed of roses; her hair always glistening from care, her nails pink and glowing. I had found Julie, through taking the apartment, which I had taken in a train of causes already shown; and in finding Julie I had learned what it is for a woman to be an artist in her way of living.

And one day while the races were on at Louisville, and Thad was away attending them, I met Julie at the elevator as I came in from a disagreeable day at the office. I had had a tiff with Mr. Dorsey, in whom I was beginning to find envy and fault-finding. "Where are you going to dine?" asked Julie. "Anywhere, why?" "If your friends are not here come and dine with me." I was only too happy to do this; so I went into Julie's apartment. I sat in the kitchen while Julie prepared the dinner. Her maid had left her. The skill and the speed with which Julie put together a salad, a chafing dish of chicken, and coffee filled me with wonder and delight. I could not be near Julie without feeling my whole being glow with friendship, tenderness. She was so human, so generous. She opened a bottle of wine; and we feasted and drank and became merry. I arose from the table as she did, passed around to where she was, and took her in my arms. Her face was so fragrant, her flesh so warm and sweet. I was thrilled through at the touch of her.

"What a boy you are!" said Julie. "You really shouldn't do this, and I shouldn't let you; why do I, I wonder?" "You like me," I said. "Of course I do; but I shouldn't."

And everything that followed was so natural, inevitable. I entered Julie's boudoir and stood in admiration of its appointments and furnishings; the lace covers for the pillows; the satin-embroidered coverlet for the bed; the pink curtains of silk at the windows, the dresser of pure white, and all the ivory and silver articles upon it; the roses upon a little *escri-toire*, the etchings on the wall, the lovely rugs; the pink blankets bearing her charming initials J. V. Never before had I been admitted to the boudoir of a woman of taste, who studied beauty and loved beautiful things. And I was thrilled through. I eyed Julie in her blue negligee, with her golden hair loosed over her shoulders. What fortune was not coming to me! What happiness was not mine! And how exquisite everything here, and in what contrast to the shabby environment in which I knew Madame Lefevre!

The next morning she came into the room where I was dozing and watching, her face glowing with vitality, her eyes dancing, her white teeth gleaming between her lips, curved in a lovely smile. And I seemed to be living over what Gautier had written of in "*Mademoiselle de Maupin*."

And we breakfasted. I went my way to think of Julie the whole day long. Who could wish for a sweeter wife than Julie? And I felt so tenderly toward her. It was not the love I had given Winifred; but surely it was love. There are so many kinds of love, as we all learn in time. I was thinking of Julie all day; and as soon as I could leave the office that night I went to her. She opened for me, looking pleased but a little wondering, as much as to say: "Back so soon to me!" And I came in and took Julie in my arms. "You do like me, don't you?" said Julie. I held her from me so as to look at her better. "Yes, you are adorable, Julie." A great flood of emotion came over me suddenly. "I love you, Julie." "Oh, boy, how absurd!" "Yes, I do. I've thought it over all day. I love you." Julie was visibly impressed

and embarrassed too. She blushed, looked down, looked up, shrugged her shoulders a little, and laughed nervously. "Julie, I'd love to marry you — I really would." "Skeet — what are you saying? You don't know what you're saying. I'm already tied to Thad. I left my husband for Thad. I'm not divorced. I couldn't marry anybody. Besides you're just a kid, and I'm getting to be an old woman." "Why, you're only seven years or so older than I." Julie turned away, clicking her tongue — "Come, you can stay to dinner again." And I did.

My meetings with Julie were under the very nose so to speak of Roger and George. But they were none the wiser. They only lasted while Thad was away to the races. Besides I was whirled off by the influence of Roger — and I lost Julie. But I had gained a vision of life through her. She had given me a certain beauty. She had touched me with no poison, ugliness, regret; and I have never thought of her except with delight.

CHAPTER XXXV

WHAT did my evening dress cost me? I will tell you. Barney Cohen had come to me after making the tailor arrangement for it and said: "There's something I want you to do. There's a man in the penitentiary by the name of F. W. Jones. He's over in jail now, having been brought here to testify in a case. He was sent down for two years. And I tell you, I want him in some deals. I sent him to the penitentiary for my own reasons; and now I want to get him out for my own reasons. You see it's this way: he was convicted by a jury years ago, but let go without sentence, pending good behavior. I found this old verdict against him and when I wanted to send him up I used it. He was sentenced on the old verdict, and has served a year of his time. I've had several lawyers at it trying to get him out; but they've fallen down. And if you're successful your fortune is made and your fame; for it will bring you a lot of business." I go into detail about this matter. It is a link in the chain of fate. It throws light upon my attitude toward the law. I could see a fatal flaw in the proceedings at once. I knew so much of courts, heard my father talk so much of jurisdictional matters, of courts losing jurisdiction or never possessing it that I concluded instantly that the court after years of delay had lost jurisdiction to pass this sentence. I said to Barney: "I can get him out." "What's your point?" asked Barney. Fearing that he would take it to some other lawyer and that I would lose my chance, I said: "Well the chances are that there is a flaw in the indictment." "Very well," said Barney, "do what you decide to do; I'll furnish the expense money."

I went to the library and looked into the authorities. I was right in my guess as to the law. I found precedent after precedent in support of my position. And accordingly I prepared a petition in *habeas corpus* and went to the jail for my client's signature to it. Barney had told me that Jones would pay a fee; that his wife had means; that Jones himself would have money as soon as he was out of prison. "What do you think, Barney, would \$300 be too much to charge him?" Barney looked at me, saying one thing, acting as if he wished to say another. "No, that's all right." He really was knocked over by my verdancy in naming so small a fee. I took a note for that amount to the jail. Jones signed it, and I went back to Barney to get the necessary expense money to go to Mt. Vernon in the southern part of the state where the Supreme Court was in session.

From Chicago to Mt. Vernon is—how far? Farther than from London to Brussels, or London to Paris, or Paris to Berlin; and almost as far as from Paris to Milan. This was the journey I set out upon; and after arriving there and being awarded the writ by the court, I had to come north nearly to Chicago, to the prison to serve the writ and cause Jones to be brought before the court at Mt. Vernon. For I was limited in expense money. I could not pay the officer's fees and mileage to serve the writ. I had to get the dispensation of the court, be deputed to serve the writ.

Having lost the train at Mt. Vernon which would have taken me to Ashley where the limited train north could be boarded, I had to drive to Ashley. The distance was twenty miles through a country so desolate and rough, so peopled by forbidding characters that even my driver was apprehensive. And yet just as we were within a hundred yards of the station at Ashley my train, which had already arrived and was standing, while we whipped the horses into a gallop, started off. I had missed it. There was nothing to do but to stay overnight in Ashley, take a train at five in the morning for St. Louis, catch a limited from there to Joliet.

I did not sleep through the night. For it was a question now whether the court would be in session after so long a journey. They had talked of adjourning on Thursday; and it was now Wednesday morning. I had yet to go to Joliet, get Jones and return to Mt. Vernon before adjournment on Thursday.

I arrived in Joliet at four in the afternoon and went at once to the prison. I went to the chief deputy's office, as the warden was not in. I handed him the writ of the court. He looked at it, threw it on the floor and scowled at me like an ogre. "Do you think you can get a man out of here? You can't. When they come here they stay." "But," I said, "the Supreme Court orders this man brought to Mt. Vernon." "It does, eh! Well the Supreme Court be damned." "Don't you pay any attention to writs of the Supreme Court?" "No, we eat 'em." He got up and left me, towering halfway to the ceiling. He was the hugest man I had ever seen.

I went out into the lobby, sat down on a settee. I was stunned. What could I do? I had the writ, but it was dishonored. What could I do? I became conscious of the presence of a convict standing near, cleaning a radiator. "What's the matter, Skeet?" He spoke without turning, then looked around. It was John Bailey, a man my father had saved from the gallows, in one of the hard fights for which his practice was distinguished in Marshalltown. I told John my story. "See the warden himself, Skeet." That was all. He went on at his work. And in a moment the warden entered the hallway. I approached him and told him my mission. "Come in the office," he said. He read the writ after we were seated. "Your deputy said he wouldn't obey this," I said. "Well, I'm the one to obey it, what's your name?" I told him. "Not the son of Hardin Kirby?" he asked. "Yes." "Well, you look like him; and he's my friend. Where are you stopping?" "Nowhere; I've got to be back in Mt. Vernon in the morning, in order to have this heard before court adjourns. I've looked up the

trains. If we go at nine to-night we can be in Mt. Vernon at about eleven in the morning." "Very well, come down and have supper with my family and see our dining room; you can go from here to the station with your man in the Black Maria."

And about 8.30 we set off. Jones was heavily manacled. Two guards with rifles accompanied us. We got on the train, sat up all night, Jones still manacled, the two guards sitting with him. I telegraphed the clerk of the court from St. Louis, saying we were on the way and would arrive at eleven.

The train arrived at Mt. Vernon a little late. The court was restive; all the business of the term was finished. They were anxious to adjourn and be off. But they had waited. I came to the clerk's office with Jones and the guards, sent word by the clerks to the chief justice that I had come. The court convened in order to take judicial notice of Jones's presence, and the return of the writ with the indorsement that it had been executed. Then the court retired to consider the case. They were absent from the court room only a few minutes. They reconvened. The chief justice in a brief opinion held that Jones's imprisonment was illegal and discharged him. A formal opinion setting forth the reason would be filed at a later time. Then the court adjourned to court in course and the judges filed from the room.

The guards stepped to Jones and removed the manacles from him. He sat in a daze for a moment, the tears dripping from his eyes. He arose at last, took my hand, then embraced me. One of the guards said: "You can never thank this boy enough, Jones, or pay him enough. You've had lots of lawyers; and he's the only one who has done anything for you." "I know it," said Jones, and we started to catch the train for Chicago.

On the way up Jones told me that he had had a severe lesson; and that he would need no more. "I'm through with Barney Cohen and all crooked ways. To-morrow I'll

come to your office at ten o'clock with the \$300 I owe you, then I'm going east with my wife, to start all over again."

I studied Jones's face. It was sullen and dogged. His brow was high and square. His eyes cold, cruel. His mouth repulsive, inhuman. All that I had heard of him as a firebug, a restless knave, was confirmed by the lucid intuition I had of him now. He seemed a kind of ghoul who would burn or poison just for money which he sought avariciously and which could do him no good after he got it.

I had traveled about 1500 miles in this matter. I had gone two nights without sleep. I was spent. I got back to the apartment half-dead; and went to bed before eight o'clock. I slept twelve hours; then went to the office to be there when Jones would come with my fee. I needed it badly. But it was ten minutes after ten pretty soon, and he didn't come. It was ten-twenty and he didn't come. It was eleven; but no word from Jones. At eleven o'clock I telephoned to Barney Cohen to find Jones. Barney was out. I went to luncheon. Mr. Dorsey went with me, eager to hear the details of my quite notable trip. We came back to the office; but no Jones. The day passed, he did not appear. I started out to find him. Barney Cohen came in at last, saying that Jones had had to go out of town suddenly, but for only a day. Several days passed. I didn't hear from Jones. I was enraged, hurt by the base injustice to which I was subjected. Finally I brought a suit against Jones. The sheriff served a summons on him at Barney Cohen's office. And then Jones vanished. But he had employed a lawyer, one of the best in Chicago, to defend the note. He interposed the defense of no consideration. No consideration! And I had given my life's blood to striking the manacles from him! The case came on for trial. Jones was not present. I got a judgment. But what was it worth? Then I went to the apartment to find Roger who was sunk in deepest melancholy!

CHAPTER XXXVI

ROGER was grieving about his girl. Should he marry her? The acuteness of her predicament had passed in some way; but she was still writing him. He was sitting now with a letter from her. And he read me parts of it. "Please come to me — please." He read this paragraph over and began to weep. He was drinking. "Come, let's go to the club for dinner." We dressed and started forth. I was in a restless mood myself.

After dinner we hired a cab and drove to the America where Roger knew the leader of the chorus. He was trying, thus far in vain, to win her. We sat at a table and began to drink. After a while the girl, Maybelle was her name, came from the stage to us, bringing her friend Gladys. And so we ordered drink after drink. I looked around the hall, and spied Lillian McFee; she bowed to me, gestured with her head for me to come to her. I excused myself and went to Lillian. I was no longer a greenhorn, a ludicrously dressed provincial. I was a man of the town now, and Lillian treated me with deference. Her smile was one of admiration. She turned from her companion and said: "Say, Skeet, what do you suppose?" "What?" "You don't know, do you?" "No, what?" "Why, Madame Lefevre suicided this morning." "What!" "Yes, jumped from the breakwater at 22d Street." "You don't mean it — why, what was the matter?" "Oh, that Dr. Green got all her money; got her into dope and she ended it. And say, boy, you started her." "No," I said somewhat sharply, "I didn't." "Well, I mean she started with you — you were not at fault, but she started with you. Before you

came she was a regular Prissy Pringle. Now her body's at Hedburn's on 22d. She has no relatives. Your Uncle Harvey is going to see to the burial."

I turned away sick, in a dark mood. What a wretched tangle life is! Madame Lefevre had as surely been swept into excess, into madness and death by torrential forces, as driftwood is carried by floods to bottomless waters. I went back to Roger. "Come," I said, "I want to go to a florist!" "No," said Roger, "wait a minute." He seemed to be plying his arts with Maybelle; and she was coquetting, denying. In a moment the manager of the America came up. He said to Maybelle — "Get out of here, go to your dressing room." Roger leaped to his feet and struck him. He was an enormous man. He felled Roger in an instant. I struck him from the back, sending him reeling. And then he came for me. House policemen rushed upon us; and we were driven into the street.

Roger was in a murderous mind, half intoxicated. He told the driver of the taxi we hired to take us to the apartment. "What for?" I asked. "I'm going to get my gun, and go back and kill that — ——" "Oh," I said, "don't. He has policemen and toughs around him. They'll kill you." "All right — just give me the first shot, and they can do what they can do." And he was in earnest. Thus for an idiotic row over a chorus girl Roger was willing to take life, to lose his own. I thought it best to humor Roger; so I said, "Do you mind if we stop at a florist's first and then go to Hedburn's? Then I'll go back to the America with you." "Anyway here's a place and it's time for a drink," said Roger. We got out, had the drink, then drove to a florist's. I bought a spray of roses, and directed the driver to Hedburn's. "Come on, Roger." I thought the spectacle of death might cool him. We went in; and there lay Madame Lefevre, but I should scarcely have recognized her. Her face was purple and bloated; her eyebrows arched into a queer questioning. Only her brow was familiar. I laid the wreath on her breast. "What time is the funeral?" I asked the

undertaker. "At eleven," he said. I made a note of the time, intending to go. Meantime Roger stood with his hat in his hand, his eyes glowing, his face pale, a kind of terror in his expression. "Who is that?" he asked, as we walked out. "A friend of mine. Come, we need a drink." We drank again. Then Roger began to buy wine. At last I vaguely remember leaning against a wall, lights dazzling my eyes, many girls standing in front of me laughing. And then I remembered nothing.

When I awoke I was in a strange room. The curtains were half down. I saw lingerie on a chair. A mirror on a dresser showed a spectral black in contrast with a parallelogram of light reflected from a window. There was the scent of perfume about me. The bed was strange. I raised myself to my elbow to look around me. I had a sleeping companion. Was it Roger? The hair was too long. It was a woman. My head ached to splitting, my tongue was as thick as a piece of felt. My eyes were half blind; but I leaned over to look at the face beside me. She was still sleeping. She did not stir. I peered into her face. The room was too dark to see well. I got up, went to the window, raised the shade slightly, walked weakly back to the bed, but on her side of it. I kneeled down and looked at the face again. Could it be the woman she resembled? Quickly like a doll she opened her eyes. Yes, it was Gertrude Webster — the girl I had known at Champaign!

I had to disentangle my drunken stupor. How had I come here? This was evidently a place of professional vice. How had I got here? Where had I found Gertrude? Was she an inmate — or had I brought her here? If so, from where? I could remember nothing but the fact of standing against a wall, lights dazzling my eyes, girls giggling in front of me. "Gertrude! what is this place?" "A bad place." "Well, but how did I get here?" "You came to the door with a friend, he went on; you were helpless and I took care of you." "What time?" "One o'clock." "What did I do?" "I helped you to bed; you fell asleep."

"Did I wake up?" "Not before now." "Are you sure?" "Sure! Well if you had seen yourself you would not have expected ever to wake up." "How did you get here?" "A man brought me." "Who?" "You don't know him." "When?" "Three days ago." "What have you been doing here?" "Nothing." "Are you living this life?" "No! no! a thousand times no!" "Well, but——" "Well, but nothing, I'm not." "Well, how is this? Do you want to get out of here?" "Take me out of here, Skeet — take me — please — please! Your coming here was an act of God's. I can't go back home; I have no money to go to a hotel — I have no place to go. Take me out, Skeet, help me!"

What could I do? I hadn't the money to send Gertrude to a hotel. If I had only collected the \$300 due me from Jones I could have played the good Samaritan in splendid fashion. As it was I was broke. Could I take Gertrude to the apartment? I couldn't. George and Roger would not tolerate that. Besides what was this girl? What would she do to me, even if I befriended her in the tenderest way? I began to think of Madame Lefevre; had I been a good friend to her? Now she was a corpse; her burial was to-day. I looked at my watch. It was already fifteen minutes of eleven. I could not make the funeral. I looked at Gertrude again. She was sitting up in bed, a picture of dishevelment, childish helplessness. "Look here! How did you get in here?" "I ran away from home with a man. He brought me to a hotel. We were going to be married. We left the hotel to come to another hotel, as he said. This is the hotel. He tricked me, and deserted me. I haven't seen him since. Having got me to run away with him, he brought me here and left me, so that he could say that I lived here, if I ever tried to bring him to account. I have been here three days, fighting off men, meantime observing the life, talking to the girls."

"Are you telling me the truth?"

"It's every word true."

I decided to take a chance on Gertrude. If I had ever failed Madame Lefevre, I would make it up to Gertrude.

"Look here! you can cook and keep house, can't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, I have an apartment with two men. We have no maid now. I'll take you over there, if you will keep house for us. These fellows are gentlemen; they will not be familiar with you. And you can try it. If I had money I'd send you to a hotel. I haven't. This is the best I can do."

Gertrude got out of bed, threw her arms around me. "I always heard you're a brick — and you are. Yes, I'll keep house for you — and to perfection. Let me stay with you till I can get my bearings again."

"I tell you what to do." I began to feel in my pockets for money. I didn't have a cent. "Where's my money, Gertrude?" "You didn't have any when you came here." I looked at Gertrude. "How do you know?" "Because you ordered some wine, or tried to; and the Madam went through your pockets and found no money." "Is that so?" I said, capitulating. I went through my pockets again. I took out my diary which had a place for cards and bills. Lo! here was my work ticket at the print shop, with the days punched that I had worked. And I had never collected the money. It was the best I could do. I handed it to Gertrude and said, "I'll indorse this over to you. Go down there; it's only a few blocks from here, and collect what's coming to me; it's about \$15.00. Then go buy a striped dress, a cap, some cuffs. Get a cheap satchel. Come to the apartment at five. I'll be there to set you to work. Keep all this a secret."

"You're a brick, Skeet, a brick."

"I'm going."

I went downstairs, into the street. Near at hand was the church to which Madame Lefevre had brought me. Around me were the gaudy houses of infamy, quiet like bluebottle flies that have sated their thirst. And I was no sooner on the

street than I repented my compact with Gertrude. What if she had lied to me, if she were really an inmate of this place! And to bring her to my apartment to handle our dishes, spread our beds! What would George and Roger say? They would turn from me forever. And yet if Gertrude told the truth, what a human turn I was doing a fellow being! And after all, what beside the association of ideas made coming into our apartment an offensive or contagious thing? Was I not coming into the apartment from the same place? Between these arguments and my word given, which I hardly knew how to revoke, I walked on, forcing myself to accept the situation as I had made it. Nevertheless a terror was creeping on me. Suppose I had contaminated myself in this debauch? Suppose in two weeks or so I should be in the hands of a doctor who would be shaking his head gravely, exercising his skill to forestall a visible leprosy, a decrepitude in years to come? I had succeeded but poorly at the law. I was always pressed for money. Jones had defrauded me. Would it not be best to go to the farm, see my grandmother, and live the next three weeks and await developments? What a coincidence if I had incurred the misfortune that Madame Lefevre had warned me against; and on the very night that she was lying in the morgue, jetsam of the city's dreadful waters! Yet I would wait a few days before going to the country. I would observe Gertrude, and send her away, out of loyalty to George and Roger, if I found her in any way a subject of suspicion.

I slipped to a telegraph office to telegraph my grandmother that I would be down in three days. Again I discovered I had no money. I had to get to the apartment; but I hadn't the fare. I went on the off side of the cars, hoping to get on when the conductor was not looking. Every conductor stared at me. I had to walk home. I went into the buffet, cashed a check, telegraphed my grandmother that I would be down in three days. Then I went to the apartment and bathed; went to bed and slept until the bell rang.

CHAPTER XXXVI

It was Gertrude. She was dressed in a maid's dress of striped gingham. She carried a cheap valise. "You advertised for a maid," she said with a smile. "Yes, can you cook?" "Yes." "Have you references?" "Yes." "From whom?" "From Skeeters Kirby." "That's good enough, come in." "You got the money all right, what did they say?" "Nothing, just paid me." I took Gertrude to the rear of the apartment and showed her her room. "Roll up your sleeves now and get dinner. Everything is here." I looked at Gertrude's face; it was fresh and rosy; at her neck, it was white and healthy; at her arms, they were shapely and strong; at her hands, her nails, they were immaculate, freshly manicured. "Aren't you going to put on house shoes?" "I haven't any, only slippers." "Put them on." "What's the use?" "Sit down, Gertrude." She did so and I began to take off her shoes. "Aren't you starting familiarities?" she asked. "No, I'm just helping you." "Well, Skeet, what right have you to break the rules?" "I made them. Just wait." "Oh," Gertrude exclaimed, "I know what you're up to. You think I'm not clean. I'll prove it to you. I want to take a bath and look fine here, Skeeters Kirby. I said you were a brick and you can be sure I'll tote fair with you."

There was a bath off the maid's room. She disrobed and turned on the water. I was standing in the kitchen. She came into her room, I called to Gertrude. "Go take your bath now; then I'll show you about the things. George and Roger will be here soon; and by that time I want to be in the front room, while you are here at work."

I brought forth the potatoes and the steak, the lettuce for the salad, all the condiments. Gertrude came into the kitchen fresh from her bath, dressed in the striped dress, looking the part of a maid, save for her delicacy, her loveliness. I showed her what to do, then went to the front room and began to read. In a few minutes George and Roger came in together. I said, "I have a girl at last." "Where did you get her?" "Advertised; and she's quite pretty. Everybody is to leave her alone." "Of course."

Gertrude served us beautifully; she had cooked the meal to perfection. And Roger and George glanced at her with admiring eyes. For the first time a fearful thought entered my mind. I was expecting Roger now to spoil my play by saying: "That's the girl you disappeared with last night. Faugh! what is this?" But no such remark came. What had become of Roger the night before? When we went into the front room I asked him. He said: "The last I remember you got out of the cab and walked away. The last I remember I was sitting in the cab. I woke up here in my bed. How I got here the Lord knows." "Well," said George, "you know what Bob Hayden said when he was here. It's well to whittle the pencil but not till it breaks off. You fellows are hitting it up pretty fast."

Gertrude went about her work in true servant fashion. I arranged with George to pay her, telling him I had to go to the country on business. For in spite of all evidences of safety I could not rid myself wholly of fear. I was glad to leave the city too. I wanted to forget Jones and his villainy; Roger and his melancholy and lapses into excess; I wanted to get away from the lights, the temptations of the city. Above all I wanted to be healed of ignoble passion and violence of spirit, the hostilities and wounds of the law, in the presence of my grandmother. I wanted to summon my boyhood back; and if I had incurred misfortune during this reckless night, I wanted to crawl away and see the city no more!

When I got to Springfield, I called my grandmother on

the telephone. And there! I heard her merry voice. She had lived through the days of the pony express, the early days of the telegraph; she had ridden in an ox cart; and taken journeys in stage coaches. Now there were rural mails, the motor car; and the telephone through which she was summoning me joyfully to the old farm, at a distance of fifty miles — to the old farm where she had abided, while the world of invention and progress grew up magically around it.

But when I arrived, after the first elation of the meeting had passed, I became reflective. My Uncle Henry had put out of mind our dreadful altercation. He was kindly, and accepted me on my present footing, as a lawyer and a denizen of the city. But fear was so much in me that my appetite was affected. My grandmother spread before me all the old dainties — all the things that I had loved as a boy and eaten. But I could not enjoy them. "What is the matter with you, Skeet? — you don't eat." "My stomach is a little bad." "Do you want some blackberry wine?" "No." "Look here, Skeet, don't you get into any scrape, like some bad fellows do. Have you?" "No'm." "Well, you be a clean man. Find a good girl and marry her. Don't do those foolish things. I believe you're in some trouble." "No." "You're not in debt or anything?" "No." "Well, how do you have time to come here? I love to have you but you mustn't neglect your business." I told grandmother about the Jones case, and that it had discouraged me. "Ah, ha! so that's it. Well, I don't wonder you can't eat. He ought to be killed. He ought to be back in the penitentiary to treat you that way. What could make him do it?" "I don't know." "Well maybe, as you did the job for this Barney Cohen, he got back at Barney Cohen by not paying you; for he calculates, maybe, that it cost Barney to put him in, and he'll let Barney foot the bill for getting him out." "I hadn't thought of that, grandma; that may be it." "Cheer up, Skeet. I've good news for you. John Armstrong is coming over to see you. He has a relative in

Chicago who has a case ; and I think it will pay you. Anyway you'll get some pay ; you won't get beat out entirely. John is coming over here to-morrow to see you."

My grandfather was now very old ; nearly ninety. He sat in his chair bent almost double, curled up like a fallen leaf, his chin on his knees, as it seemed. He brightened at times and talked with me for a few minutes with something of his old character, asking me about my life in Chicago. His memory was not gone ; he just seemed to be falling into sleep ; or he was like a fire that is in the ashes, which may glow occasionally as a piece of unburned fuel takes a blaze from the coals. But my grandmother, though only two years his junior, was unchanged. She sat at the head of the table and served as in the old days. She still milked the cows. She took short walks with me up the road, over into the orchard. We rode over to see the neighbors, Henry driving for us. She revived my childhood days, my boyhood days, by bringing forth the trinkets that I had thrilled over in the long ago. She remembered the paper knight that I had treasured as a child, which I never had looked at then without hearing fairy trumpets ; never without getting the magic of storied woodlands. And now it was a paper knight, shorn of all its enchantment.

And here was I staying in the country in obedience to a sickening fear, a weighing apprehension. I was not only from the city, but stained and subdued to the city's lust and restlessness, its disquiet and its vanity. Truly, what was I ? Had I, the shadow, been caught in the ponderable drama of the earth sphere ? And what was to become of it ? Could I ever be a success again ; or was I now incarnated and doomed to work back to that thing of eyes which I was before ? And so it was that I felt much as a spirit must feel, if compelled to pass from the flesh to the spirit and back again with such vertiginous speed that all the perspective is twisted and the sense of individuality and environment is lost.

It was good for me that John Armstrong came, as he did

now; and my father was with him. It was charming and laughable to see these two men, now growing elderly, chum together in a spirit of boyish comradeship. As they drove up they were talking together in the most confiding way; both laughing with much good humor. And as of old my grandmother was overjoyed to see my father. She loved him in a special and intimate way. She was proud of him, too, and hurt that life had not rewarded him to the measure of his remarkable gifts, the beauty of his person, the abounding vitality and power that she had given him out of her own being. She brought forth her blackberry wine, and served him and John. My grandfather, still dreaming of the days when strong drink would be abolished as slavery had been, sat in his room curled up in sleep, and as far from this touch of hospitality as the dead were. I heard my grandmother ask my father about my mother and Myrtle and Davis. They were off in Chicago a good deal; it looked as if she would find oil on the Texas land. Davis was going to Harvard. He would have, without wishing it especially, without striving for it, that classical course that I had about broken myself to attain. I could see that my grandmother grieved for my father, as she did perhaps when he came to her as a boy, hurt or wounded. And she gave vent to monosyllables of regret that he had been trapped so wickedly at Marshalltown, where the battle on him never ceased; and where his successes left him more envied, and more bitterly attacked. The gracious friendships that he knew in Petersburg, based upon old associations and family respect had never been his at Marshalltown.

I sat with my father and studied him. Surely nature does not often try for such physical perfection as it did with him; such a head, such perfection in a nose, in the shape of his face; such glowing eyes, such a brow, such a deep chest, such a straight and manly bearing; and such a voice, orotund and musical. In the drawing-room in Edinburgh where Burns was received at the beginning of his fame, their distinguished visitors would have turned to look at my

father ; just as in his own place, in Chicago, wherever he went he was the object of wonder and admiration.

And yet he had risen only by an iron will and an indefatigable battle to a place of preëminence in a country town and at a country bar.

We sat under the maple trees and talked — my father, John Armstrong, grandmother. His fund of anecdotes, of stories, of humorous sallies and observations, of wise and subtle philosophization was exhaustless. He did not repeat. And I wondered at his fate in life ; I had no explanation of it — none except that I had got into a place of my own in Chicago ; I could see myself in the future hopelessly entangled in that place as it became more inextricable and more definite in its character of a fully revealed fate. And I could see by what paths I had come ; but I could not tell why I had taken these paths. Surely it was so with him. But what is the teleology of life, of nature, which makes no use, no full use at least, of some of its most perfect productions.

My father had brought me the letter which he had written me about — the one he had mislaid. It was from Mrs. Huntley Moore, Winifred's aunt. When I read it the caprices of fate were again revealed to me in one of their most fantastic and ludicrous aspects. It turned out that she had been living in Chicago ; in this letter she had invited me to come to see her, to go to the opera with her. What had I not missed ? All my life had been different, perhaps, if I had received this letter. I had not identified myself with the personality, with the fate of Madame Lefevre ; I had not responded to the waywardness of Roger Farnsworth ; I had not become entangled with the degradation of Gertrude Webster, nor laid myself liable to the calamity that I was fearing had befallen me. I had not done any of these things — perhaps. Instead Mrs. Huntley Moore might have brought me in contact with some radiant woman fitted to be my wife and settle my course. Mrs. Moore was now, doubtless, gone from Chicago, had given up her apartment there. And here was her letter telling me of the

chances I had lost, and which had been withheld from me through no fault of mine whatever!

John told me of the business which he wished me to attend to, which was that a niece of his, who had married a man of considerable means, who had died, was in the difficulty of trying to obtain her rights in the estate. She had had lawyers who did not consummate the settlement, and she had determined to change counsel. John had written her of me. And John would return to Chicago with me when I went, bring her to my office and help her to see it through. I was happy over this, so far as I could be happy now over any business prospect; and we arranged to go to Chicago together. And what a drama lay unfolded in the circumstance of John's visit, and to which Roger should unconsciously contribute! I knew that George would be delighted with John and with his fiddling; I was not so sure of Roger, whose club life and city life had made him blind to so much of reality in character and in simple delights.

My father only stayed at the farm a day or two and then went his way. And at last the three weeks had gone by and I felt sure that all was well with me, as it was in fact. John came by the farm to take me into Petersburg, for we were going to Chicago from there.

I went in to say good-by to my grandfather. He was sitting in his chair, doubled up, asleep. I touched him on the shoulder. He opened his eyes and looked at me with their old brightness. But such tragedy was in them! In spite of his faith in God the Father, in a heaven of reunion and bliss, life was a tragedy to him, the grave a fearful doorway to paradise! His whole frame trembled at this parting. His lower jaw shook with a tragic uncontrol, with the palsy of sorrow and foreboding. He did not expect to see me again. "Farewell, son," he said in a broken voice, the tears streaming from his eyes. "Farewell." I went to the door where my grandmother was waiting to bid me adieu. She had a bundle of things made up for me. She kissed me, embraced me, took me by the shoulders, held me

from her to gaze in my eyes. She said: "Be a good man, Skeet, be truthful, honorable, be courageous, industrious; marry a good woman and be comforted by her — be a good husband to her." Then with a little breaking laugh she added, "Come back again and see your old granny."

John was waiting for me at the gate. He laughed as I got in and said, "Well, by God, I ain't been in Chicago for fifteen years — do you suppose they'll let me get back without killin' me?" "Of course." "'Pears to me, they kill people right on the streets just for a nickel, by God." "Have you brought your fiddle, John?" "You bet I have." "That's good."

Grandma waved me good-by from the door, and then I was off again — but never to see my grandfather after this. He was in his grave before the winter passed.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Who should be on the train but Zueline, and with her baby! She had married, was living in Bloomington. Her husband was in the electrical supply business. Ah me! the train passed under the hill where Mitch was asleep with the rocks and the earth. And at that moment Zueline was laughing and raising the veil from the face of her baby! It smiled as I tickled it under the chin. It smiled as we passed under the hill where Mitch was asleep. What was that summer of long ago in which Mitch had grieved for Zueline? What are the sorrows of life but the gulleys made by sudden rains, the gashes torn by torrents, filled in, effaced by the deposits of later years; hidden beyond the possibility of discovery by the glaciation of the ages. Zueline with her baby! Mitch so long dead, all but forgotten! Zueline not pretty now, rather hard looking as Mrs. Miller said she would be. Surely the realm of man's spirit has all the changes, the healings, the oblivions, the catastrophes, all the blind momentums and cessations and futile workings to an end that never reveals itself, that the world of physical nature has! What really matters after all? The sorrows of earth are not healed by heaven, but by the blind surgery of time and change!

When we arrived in Chicago John was terrified by the hustle, the crowds, the rattle of cars and trucks. He was in fear of being robbed, having read so much of hold-ups in Chicago. He clung to me, at the same time keeping a tight grip upon his curious old valise. It was toward five o'clock; and in order not to put John through the ordeal of crossing town and catching street cars, I hired a taxi to drive us to the apartment.

George and Roger were both there. And Gertrude, faithful and industrious, was beginning to prepare dinner. George was delighted with John. He knew something of fiddles, took John's in his hands, drew the bow across the strings, and pronounced it a seasoned instrument. Roger scarcely knew what an expression of disinterested superiority came over his face. He saw John as a peasant, a clown. And while George was roaring with laughter at John's talk, Roger sat without a smile, somewhat saturnine, and without a word.

"Skeet," said George, "where did you get this maid?" "Advertised as I told you, why?" "Why, she's a wonder. This apartment runs like a Swiss watch now — and say she's the prettiest thing! She's a jewel." "Well, you leave her alone, George." "Oh, I have — don't worry. But Lord, any fellow could fall in love with her."

Gertrude came in at last and called us to dinner. She did not even take the liberty of noting my return. John, keen-eyed to the surroundings, scrutinized Gertrude as she passed in and out of the room serving the dinner. Later he said to me, "By God, Skeet, where did you get that girl? She ain't no regular cook — she's a lady."

I slipped away from the rest and went into the kitchen. Gertrude began to laugh. "Well," I said, "how have you fared?" "Fine! I've only been out of the house once since you went away. I took a walk, — one evening." "What have you been doing?" "Reading." "And these fellows — have they left you alone?" "Yes, indeed." "Have they paid you?" "Yes, I have \$21. By the way, the lady across the hall, Mrs. Hilburn, moved while you were gone. She left a bottle of wine for you. How about it, Skeet, is she your friend?" "Oh, yes." "She's a pretty woman." "A good-hearted woman, a good neighbor. I'm sorry she's gone."

And now we asked John to play the fiddle; he was willing but he wanted an accompanist. "There can't be no regular fiddlin' without a organ or somethin' to keep time." We had a piano, no organ; but we had no accompanist; and I

knew of none. For the first time Roger awoke into interest. "I believe I can get somebody." He stepped to the telephone.

In about an hour two women came, evidently old friends of Roger's. One was Alicia Adams, the other Ethel Landon. Alicia was black-haired, rather pale. She had large dark eyes, a strong, powerful nose, a full forehead. Her bust was delicate but full, her figure graceful, svelte. Ethel — but there is no use to describe her — she plays no part in my drama.

Alicia accompanied John in the most thrilling manner, and greatly to his delight. He played "The Speckled Hen," "Rocky Road to Jordan," "Pete McCue's Straw Stack," "Chaw Roast Beef" as in the old days when Mitch and I had been captured by John from the *City of Peoria* and taken to his house to await our notified fathers. George was in high spirits over John; and John told stories and swore, in perfect unconsciousness that two women were present. They were greatly amused in fact. And pretty soon Gertrude entered with a tray, serving beer and sandwiches. Afterwards, and to end the evening, I called for the wine which Julie Valentine had left me. Gertrude brought that; and then John played again and told other stories. His mine, such as it was, was exhaustless. Even Roger smiled now. And Alicia and Ethel laughed riotously.

There was something — a magnetism — about Alicia that drew me; and yet in a way I was repelled. I caught her looking at me with wide, comprehending eyes — eyes of admiration, it seemed too. I noticed that her words had an incisiveness, a subtle power as of an ether flapped gently in the face, which startles and exhilarates.

When the party was over and I had the opportunity I asked Roger: "Who is Alicia Adams?" "Oh, I've known her a number of years. She teaches dramatics." "Where did you meet her?" "Through my girl down East. Alicia came there one summer. They met here in Chicago before that. She's poor, works hard to support herself. My girl

gave her a vacation that summer at the seashore. Do you like her?" "Rather — there's something to her. She has a kind of fox face, however, triangular, watchful, cunning. At least that is my impression." "Oh, she's just a girl, like any other girl. You're always seeing extraordinary things, Skeet."

The next morning I took John to the office. Patrick Dorsey looked at him in a half-contemptuous way, but when he saw that John had come on business, he changed his attitude, began hovering around us where we were consulting.

He opened my door every now and then, making the excuse to ask me about something of business in the office. I had, as I have told, the arrangement with Mr. Dorsey by which I could attend to such business as came to me. Yet I could see that he wished to be taken into this matter of John's, and felt slighted that I did not arrange it. John had sent a message to his niece to meet us at my office; and she came, and we went fully into the matter of her estate. In three days we had disentangled it; I procured for her all that she expected. Then I went to John. "What shall I charge your niece?" "It's worth a good fee, you've got about \$100,000 for her, including the house which her stepson wanted. Charge a good fee, Skeeters. She expects to pay you." "How about \$3000?" "That's fair, by God," said John. So that was my fee, and the niece paid me and was satisfied.

I wanted to recompense Mr. Dorsey for what he had done for me in my case against Jones. I didn't want to share this business or this fee with him; but I did not wish to be under obligations to him for the service he had rendered me. I went to him and said: "I want to pay you for trying my case against Jones." "You don't owe me anything." "Oh yes, I do, it took two days of your time." He knew I would not make this offer except that I had made some money just now. Instead of settling the matter that I brought up, he asked: "How much did you get out of the Armstrong

case?" "Three thousand dollars." His eyes rolled in his head in a look of surprise. His countenance fell. I could see that he was angry. "Well, if you are going on like this, we must make a different arrangement. For there's lots to do here, and I need an assistant who can give me all his time." This was a new note in Dorsey, for I had neglected nothing while transacting this business for John's niece. Thus my father's fears were fulfilled. And this was the beginning of dissension and rupture between me and Mr. Dorsey. Barney Cohen was bringing me business; what practice I had was already quite profitable and of a very good class. The rivalry between us that these circumstances created, descended in him into something worse; and he used his power as I thought to hold me back, to obstruct me. Again I was a devil editor among journeymen printers; again I was tugging at the clods of myself to mould this material into harmonious form. I finally forced Mr. Dorsey to accept \$200 from me for his services in my behalf. That was just \$100 less than the note I had not collected from Jones.

We gave another party at the apartment the night after I settled the estate of John's niece. Again Alicia and Ethel came — and we added a banjo to the orchestra. In the afternoon George had taken John and me to a vaudeville show — and there, wonderful to say, Brose Horne was on the program. Brose Horne with whom I had hunted rabbits at Marshalltown! He was a marvel, too. We went behind the wings to see him, invited him to the apartment. He came; and thus we had the piano, the fiddle, and the banjo. Again Gertrude served beer and sandwiches. Roger grew wonderfully mellow and jolly. He warmed up to John. He danced a jig. John told new stories and swore with the old and accustomed unconsciousness. George roared with laughter; and Gertrude lingered in the hallway to enjoy the bacchanalia. The next day John went home bearing to Aunt Caroline numerous presents from George and me. We loaded him up with trinkets for himself, two bottles of rare

whiskey. And he started off happy, laughing and saying "By God," between every other word.

Roger knew that I had made some money, and he came to me and said: "Look here, Skeet! You've been playing the law business like a bucket-shop gambler; get a seat on the Board of Trade." "What do you mean?" "Well, the law business is a gamble, but you can be a licensed, high class gambler and make thousands; or you can be a little gambler with no position and a suspect, subject to persecution and doubtful success. I want you to join one of my clubs, two of them if you will. Get in with the big fellows. I know every millionaire in town. I'll introduce you. Make one of them. They have business. You can do it. Get a seat on the Board of Trade, so to speak. Clean up some money. Quit the bucket shop."

I decided, at least, to join the clubs; and to these ends I allowed Roger to propose me. In the interval of my admission I had a card of courtesy. I stood before the bulletin board, reading my name: "Arthur Kirby, Esq. Proposed by Roger Farnsworth, Esq.: seconded by Walter Horton, Esq." I smiled to myself. What was I becoming? After all my dreams should I end up a corpulent, red-faced millionaire? After all my reading and studying should I become a figure in the great life of Chicago as a lawyer, a capitalist? Around in the lounging chairs, under the reading lamps, were the doges of the city, those fabulous giants whose faces I had first seen when walking the streets with Madame Lefevre; or sitting on the porch of Uncle Harvey with Lillian McFee and Billy Phelan. They bowed to me distantly — sometimes. Here again I was a shadow, a watcher, in the life of the club, but not of it. Not after I was a member even; I came and went a stranger, in no intimate way identified with the club, knowing but a few and not those few well.

Roger and I were frequently together here; sometimes George was with us. But he looked on my joining with a humorous irony. He saw that I did not belong here. And again I felt I was feeling my way in life, without touching

the reality that belonged to my nature. Roger did his part for me, I must say; he introduced me right and left, openly, or in asides spoke of my great abilities as a lawyer. But nothing was coming of it, as yet.

And then my mother and Myrtle came to town, and contributed to the unfolding of my Karma.

CHAPTER XXXIX

MY mother had expressed her displeasure at my employment by J. Steele & Co. She knew through the Marshalltown banker, or otherwise, of the disreputable character of J. Steele. She did not like the progress I was making in law. Again mother and Myrtle were stopping at the finest hotel. Myrtle's room was full of flowers, notes were being delivered to her. The telephone was calling her. And my mother had business conferences. She was saying that it was a certainty that she would find oil on her Texas land. Meantime she was being financed in a way which she did not disclose to me. And now she said: "If you are alert to your opportunities your fortune is made. Study corporation law, study the oil law, the land laws. If you become proficient I can place you eventually. Get away from small business."

I could see the perfect wisdom of this advice; but while I could take hints from Julie Valentine as to the æsthetics of life; while I had learned literature from Winifred, and in a degree from Suevie, and had been helped by "Grinner"; while my grandmother's admonitions to prudence and honorableness had taken root in me and produced; nothing came of Myrtle's reactions to life, nor from my mother's instructions. I was uninfluenced by them, except in unconscious paths, and in a large measure without good to me.

Yet as my present place was growing more burdensome day by day, and difficulties piled around my aspirations, and loaded my energies with burdens, I decided to ask Dorsey for more money; and if he refused to leave him. Accordingly I ventured to request an increased salary, with a faint hope that he might offer me a partnership, for such was my

divided vision, after all. In spite of the fact that I wished to go it alone and also that I had about \$3000 ahead, I was fearful of starting for myself. I did not want to turn up a year hence with no increase of business, but rather with a failure of business and in an office of my own to maintain, wholly upon my own resources.

Mr. Dorsey looked at me with visible indignation, and said, "No, I can't afford it. Besides you do not do what I wish you to on the present salary." "Very well," I said, "I'm going to leave." He was stunned; for in fact he could not run an office without some one of my particular capabilities to help him. I could see this readily in his expression. But he stood fast and said "All right." And I speedily closed with him, rented an office, hired a clerk, and started for myself. We did not on the surface part enemies. He was really a good man, and remained my friend. And later I went to him when I wished assistance in the fight on Jones which I resumed at opportunity.

And just now the kaleidoscope shifted all around. Gertrude had received a letter from a girl friend in the East to come on a visit. She got ready and went, thanking me for the good fortune that had befallen her through me. George and Roger loaded her with honorariums, gifts and money; as I did. I never saw her again. And as she passes out of this narrative, it is only needful to say that several years afterward she wrote me from a town in New York saying that she was married, had a baby, and all was well with her.

Then word came that my grandfather had fallen into death while dozing in his chair. I did not go to the funeral. And now what I could see would happen to Davis, the youngest of our family, happened to Henry, the youngest of my father's family. Davis was being schooled; I was denied a schooling. He would probably inherit the bulk of my father's estate, as he was the darling of my mother. And Uncle Henry inherited the bulk of my grandfather's estate, after my grandmother, given the life interest of the whole, should die. My father wrote me this letter:

"Dear Son : Your grandfather has left a will which knocks me over. Henry gets the whole estate, except for a few miserable thousand to me and your Aunt Melissa and after grandma is dead. Do you remember my saying that I would inherit, on that occasion when we were dividing your treasure and Mitch's and giving your share to Mr. and Mrs. Miller? Well, this is the end. I can't understand it. Here I went forth into the world and worked for myself. Henry stayed at home and lived off the old folks. I have never had anything from grandfather but the house at Petersburg costing about \$1500. Henry has spent about \$20,000, as it turns out, in a futile endeavor to raise stock. And now he gets it all. I am hurt and mad, discouraged a little too. My labors are growing heavier. This place grinds me more every year. Your mother and Myrtle are always gone. I am alone, live alone, and I feel like saying I don't give a damn. The only thing I wish is that you were here with me.

"Your father,

"H. K."

And I wrote this letter on my new stationery :

"Dear Father: I will come to you at once. If you wish to start a suit to break the will, I will come and help you to the best of my ability. I am as much hurt as you. I have only two explanations of this: one that Henry as the youngest child, who stayed at home, has stepped into the proverbial good luck; the other that grandfather did not like your liberal attitude in politics, your hatred of prohibition, your free way of living and letting live. You have always been an ideal Democrat. That is, a believer in liberty; not a believer in using even the majority to control people as to things which are their right to do or not to do as they choose, under a democratic theory. It is miserable for you to be penalized this way, if this be the fact — and I will leave everything here and come to you, if you wish me.

"Affectionately your son,

"Skeet."

There was no answer to this letter. The whole matter went into the silences! When we met he did not mention the subject. One has no word for great hurts taken, lived through, critical illnesses of body or soul.

And now Roger was preparing to leave Chicago. I did not know the exact footing he had come to with the girl from whom he had run away. Whether she went through a maternal experience, whether she was in fact ever approaching one; whether he was going back to marry her, I did not know. Roger had grown more self-controlled, more happy of spirit. He spoke with genuine feeling of our life together, of his friendship for George Higgins. He was truly fond of me; and in spite of the fact that I belonged to a different world from him in every way. He was leaving on the Limited; and after breakfast we sat for about an hour before parting.

"Well, Skeet," he said, "here I go, and probably I'll never be back, except to make hurried visits. I don't like Chicago, the West, in spite of the fact that I've had a good time here, and have made friends of you and George here. You're a brick, Skeet. If I had hunted over the world I could not have found a man better suited to be my friend at this time. I've learned a lot from you. I wish I had your industry, your knowledge. I wish I had your will. I wish I had to work as you do. I've had a certain sportsman's experience, club life and all that; but you've had such a world of things besides — things I can never get into. But I can give you a piece of advice. You'll be getting married one of these days; and why not marry to advantage and not to disadvantage? Suppose you load up with a poor girl — well, for love — what of it? I'll tell you the French have it right. Marriage is to make a home and raise children. It's a business proposition — this love doesn't count except to get you into it. Now you're a wonderful man, Skeet — I don't say this to con you, but to tell you the truth. Suppose you marry some girl that you think you love, who has no family, no alliances, no money, nothing. Well, you'll just be pulling along for

the rest of your life. Why not take a girl who has family, and money? If you do you can be all that you were meant to be. And I'll tell you something — there's Martha Fisk — her father has twenty millions — he is dying now with diabetes — Martha is the only child — her mother is dead — and you can have her for the asking."

"Well, old chap, why don't you take her?"

"For one thing — her father tolerates me, even likes me because I have money, have had business with him. He knows my grandmother and all that — but he also knows the scrape I've been in. He thinks I'm a society roué and sport; and he stands in horror of such things. No, Martha is not for me — and not for you, Skeet, either, if you know of a rich girl about whom you can get up more of a case than any man could for Martha. Perhaps I may; you may. If you don't, take her."

This was our final talk; this Roger's summation of what he had found about me as it related to my program and future in life. And soon he was gone. I had one letter from him; and after that heard nothing. After an intimate association of such length he went away and was lost to me forever!

CHAPTER XL

I WAS so enraged, so hurt from time to time by the blasphemous lies and the lancinating injustices of the law. I was getting enough business to keep me going. Barney Cohen was sending me a certain speculative litigation, and now and then old friendships bore fruit, as happened in the case of John Armstrong. Another thing : one day Mrs. Flaherty, whom I had known in Petersburg, came to see me. She was a widow now. Her husband had been the sexton of one of the churches at Petersburg. I had played ball with her boys in the orchard of Bob Pendleton before I became the chum of Mitch Miller. They were a numerous family. One of the boys, Charley, had become a switchman for one of the railroads in Chicago. The family, such as it was, after Mr. Flaherty died, had lived in Chicago. And Charley was the main support of his mother. The case was this : Charley was coupling cars as the member of a switching crew. A train was being made up. An engineer had backed some cars on to a track that ran up a steep grade and made a short curve, so much so that the outer corners of the cars were brought in contact. He had to go between the cars to lift a link pin ; the train was moving the while, bringing the corners closer together as the cars got on to the narrow parabola of the curve. Quickly he was caught between the corners and crushed to death.

I went into the case with all possible energy and interest ; both on account of the old association, and because of my belief in the justice of the widow's claim. The theory I presented was that the railroad company owed Charley a safe place in which to work. The defense was that the

company was not required in law to adopt any specific plan for the construction of its tracks; that the fact of the curve being dangerous, or producing danger, to switchmen was subordinated to the physical conditions as to space, the proximity of other tracks, the use to which the track was necessarily put. Back and forth we read law books, until something a judge had said years before, in a foreign jurisdiction, which imposed respect if anything, but obedience not at all, turned the mind of the judge against me, and I lost the case.

Mrs. Flaherty was hopeful that a court of review would reverse the trial judge. I helped her with money to appeal the case. And we lost there; and she came in to see me half indignant, half heartbroken. She looked at me as if she thought I was not the lawyer for her case; that she had been mistaken in choosing me. I could say nothing. We were beaten and for good. And after a few idle words she went out scarcely bidding me good day. I had done my best; I had even spent my own money on her case — and here was the result. What is life, I thought, but a devouring?

The cobra swallows the black snake. Big business devours little business. Big lawyers destroy little lawyers. Railroads make the law; railroads use up the boys from the orchard, kill them and then turn their dependent mothers out of court upon the basis of draconic principles, under warrant of a few lines of type expressing the opinion of a judge, now himself dead, who spoke in another state or in England. Could the dream of an idiot be more absurd, more foul, or more full of hobgoblins and insane revelings?

Yes, and for my own gate and path, doubtful as they were, what strength of will, what resource in my life could hold me steadfast to a faith or a purpose, if I had had any, in the face of the news now at hand that mother had struck oil, was already very rich, and that she and Myrtle were in the East, and would soon go to Europe for an indefinite stay?

Ah! Winifred, I needed you now! Rather, perhaps, I needed my better self. Always I had felt that I had a star,

a protecting dæmon. At the core of me was a confidence that I could not fail, that my feet would find the way. But in this hour my star was hidden, my dæmon departed, my confidence occulted by reflections that I was just like the rest of human beings about me — subject to every turn of the tide, ripple in the water, stir of the breeze, floating log or stick, or touch of snake or turtle!

And now the devil entered me. I would lift myself out of this ceaseless strife and torturing defeat. I would buy a seat on the Board of Trade: I would leave the bucket shop of the law, if I did not leave the law altogether. I would place my life on the higher levels, where people lived, feasted, danced, traveled, saw strange places, did great things with this world. I would not go further with this convict pace between the apartment and my office —

And I dressed and went to call on Martha Fisk. I had had a rare spiritual richness, the intellectual development of an association with a woman genius like Winifred Hervey. I had learned life from Julie Valentine, even from Madame Lefevre. And as I sat veiling my light from the uncomprehending eyes of Martha I could scarcely suppress the laughter that welled up within me. I felt truly satanic, like Mephisto perambulating with Martha in "Faust."

Martha was dressed, as always, in modest gray. Her nose glasses were pinched on her thin little nose; her mild blue eyes looked through them and over them at me, in a sort of embarrassment. She could sense that she was in the presence of powerful wings, that had winnowed distances and ethers unknown to her. Her brown hair, none too abundant, was done in a little knot. She wore a diamond sunburst on her collar. And we talked of Roger first, and at some length. Then we talked of mathematics; and of chemistry, in which she was greatly interested. After a while Mr. Fisk came in. His face was pale, flaccid, almost transparent. The white of his eyes was like blue-white porcelain. He was a failing man, no doubt of that. I made an effort to make myself interesting to him. I sensed

his politics and spoke in sympathy with them. For outside of the fact that I had imbibed from my father a certain fundamental democracy, I was nothing else but a libertarian and without conviction. I had tried in vain to fall into the logic of the single tax; I had studied socialism, and anarchism. Even back in the days of my friendship with Virgil Reese I had read and discussed Spencer's "Social Statics," and "Data of Ethics."

But with these preachments and philosophies I was on the distant terms of the spectator. They had not worked into my being and become a part of me. And so it was that I could agree with Mr. Fisk, and give him reasons besides for his own faith. We talked of finance, of the state of the market, of the imminence of war; and, yes, of the progress of Christianity in heathen lands. For he was a devout man. Money and religion were his gods. I left with the feeling that I had made an impression. Both Martha and her father asked me to come again—to come sometime for dinner. I stepped from the door into the Lake Shore Drive, turned back to look at the house where I meant to live soon, the master of Martha's millions.

Later I met Mr. Fisk at the club, into which, fortunately for my present ambition, Roger had introduced me. And Mr. Fisk treated me with great politeness, bringing me into more intimate contact with the capitalists who were his friends, and who lounged and conferred about the palatial rooms that spoke nothing to me but words and warning that this was not my place, not my association. And I went on paying calls to Martha; but now in order to be able to make something of a show of independence in case I should marry Martha, I applied myself to the law with harder resolution than ever. Behold how I was forced into it! What one of us can choose his path or follow it after he has done so? Fortunate is he who can. He is the genius, the giant. And where now were Plato and Sophocles; where Kant and Sir William Hamilton; where the dreams I had at Marshalltown? But where the spirit of my Winifred;

whose loss I could not support, even with the mitigating influence of time, and so much of rapid change?

One day two old gentlemen called to see me, sent by Mr. Fisk. They had a land case; a large amount was involved. Phases of it had already been presented to the Supreme Court, with varying success. It was one of that kind of cases which fall at times to a young lawyer of eager energy and fresh interest. The older practitioners are more skilled in the calculus of success in such litigation; or else they have exhausted themselves on it. But also it was a case that meant a fortune to me if I could win it. Was not Mr. Fisk thoughtful to send it to me? Did not this act of his signify an interest in me, an acceptance of me? I took the case, and spent days in the study of the papers, in the mastery of the decisions already rendered in it, in the preparation of an elaborate brief of the law involved. My clients were delighted with my work; I made a liberal contract with them. And I could see light through the heavy work ahead of me, through which I was struggling — but to what clearing, and what sky, after all?

In addition to all my other activities I had seen the workings of nearly every group of dreamers, world savers, and reformers in the city. I had attended on occasion the meetings of literary celebrities, where original poems were read, songs sung, toasts proposed. I had stolen into audiences gathered at anthropological societies, free-love societies, societies preaching anarchism, societies propagating socialism, the single tax; societies of half-educated persons seeking to overcome lost opportunities, or opportunities denied them earlier in life to become learned. I had run the gamut of the radicals; and my conclusion was that, for the most part, the radical has matured out of the boy who refuses to follow the school course, rebels at the text-book, and plunges over into the literature of the Prometheans big and little, to the neglect of the prescribed studies, and always under the delusion that he is more gifted than his fellows. At all these places I was a listener, a witness.

I never became a part of any of these bodies. I read the books of their masters : Marx and Kropotkin, Henry George — what not. I weighed and considered their preachings; but I never became a convert, nor even an enthusiast, a novitiate. But, nevertheless, I was suspected of these affiliations and of radicalism.

In the waters of Chicago there are great devilfish, sharks, monsters who glide softly through the depths of chicanery and money lust that make for the terror and the fascination of the city. These creatures know their food; and you may look like a squid or a minnow, or be one, in fact; in either case you are noted and classified; and the time comes when a great shadow draws near you and invites you into his stomach. One of these creatures was Cavette Errant, a lawyer who from time to time took note of me, smiled at me, flattered me, and sought to bring me into his circle.

This man saw me! I had come into his waters! And on a day he sent for me. He was preparing to apply for a receiver of a great corporation. He couldn't do it himself; there were reasons why he couldn't; that is, he couldn't allow his name to go on the papers. But he would advise with me; he would steer the proceedings; he would manage the newspapers; he would see that the case was heard by a fair judge. There would be a good fee for the work. And I could have one quarter of it. The case appealed to me. I went to work with accustomed energy, briefing the case, mastering the facts. In short, we were only half through trying the case before the corporation that we attacked cried for an armistice, offering to allow a large judgment to pass against it if we would not press it to a conclusion. As I did not have the authority to make terms I had to consult Cavette Errant. I did. And presently I saw his office swarming with the great lawyers whose names I knew, whose faces I had sometimes seen. Cavette Errant had brought these pirates to their knees. An agreed judgment was entered; but the corporation had to pay Cavette Errant's fee, or my fee as it was called. Before

I knew it Cavette Errant had the check. It was for \$50,000. Ah! one quarter of this was mine—\$12,500—and I went to get it.

He was preoccupied, writing letters, clearing up his desk, running about with quick energy, going in and out the room. Presently he went out and returned with a check for me. It was for \$3750! I said, "My share is \$12,500." "You're crazy with the heat," said Cavette Errant. "Why, but you made the terms; I was to have one quarter. I have done all the work!" "You have done nothing of the kind. Besides, I am hard pressed now." He turned and looked at me. His black eyes were not human; they were bestial like a wolf about to attack, a snake about to strangle a rabbit. His brows looked thick, cruel, like the gray integument around the eyes of a shark. He was the asp; his glance focused in a bright venom. His shoulders shrugged into angry remonstrance. He was an animal fighting off other animals hungering for a part of the carcass. Clerks and stenographers came and went; he got up quickly, as if on an errand in the outer office. I sat there waiting for his return. He didn't return. The minutes grew to half an hour, three quarters of an hour. I went to the outer office, to find that he had left for the day.

I shall return to Cavette Errant later in this portrayal of myself.

CHAPTER XLI

I WAS leaving intact the \$3000 which I had made out of the case which John Armstrong had brought to me and the \$3750 I had made out of the tax case. I was working hard to finance myself out of the business that came day by day. Even George had a case now and then which he could not handle. He sent it to me. Our life at the apartment was wholly delightful. We saw many plays, we went to concerts, we spent happy hours scribbling nonsense verses. His mother's letters from California always contained the message: "My love to Skeeters Kirby." She was still at work on the translation of the "*Æneid*." What charming industry and will! For she was an old lady, quite alone in the world, except for George, and a sister with whom she was living in the West. It was always an occasion when one of her letters came, and we could read it together in the evening. Sometimes George would be absent for a few days on a hunt. He had built himself a log cabin near Rock River; and there he went with an old crony and stayed for days. George had about given up the literary quest, allowed it to submerge in the larger interests of living, as he deemed it. But he kept encouraging me to write. "In the name of God, Skeet, where did you get the pseudonym Willis Aronkeil?" I told him, and he showed his butternut teeth in a hearty laugh. It was the name, in fact, of one of the hired men on my grandfather's farm.

On one of the occasions when George had gone to his cabin, I was idling about the apartment, looking over old letters, clearing out useless mementos and papers, when I came across the letter which Mrs. Huntley Moore had

written me; and which, due to my father's carelessness, had not been delivered to me for months afterward. It gave her address as it then was in Chicago. But why had I never looked in the telephone directory to find her? I did now; and there was her name, with the same address as she gave me in her letter. I called her number and in a moment I was talking to her. She invited me to dinner for that night.

She lived in an apartment on the Lake Shore Drive, one which she said she kept, no matter what her travels were. "Sometimes I am in England," she said, "sometimes in St. Louis, sometimes East; but I keep this apartment, bringing my servants when I come." Inevitably Winifred came into our conversation. "I hope life deals gently with you, Skeet, — may I call you that?" I nodded. "I hope so; for surely if prayer can avail, and the dead have the power of prayer, your name will never be forgotten." I looked out of the window at the lake beating along the piers — how uselessly, and as it had done for thousands of years before man appeared upon this globe! And Winifred! Into my life like a dream, gone from my life like the gold and green of a dawn amid symphonic pines. "Yes," said Mrs. Moore, "the memory of Winifred will be a precious thing to you always." "Yes," I answered, my voice failing, the tears in my eyes. Surely whatever I had done, whatever I should do or be, I had retained, and would keep, the memory of Winifred. My feet might be in the mire; but her face would shine ahead of me like a guiding star.

And finally Mrs. Moore told me of Winifred's last day, her going-away day, she called it. They had driven from Stratford to Warwick; and Winifred was never more happy, more spirited. They had returned to Stratford; on the way back she had been talking much of me. Then suddenly on arrival she grew very weary, and had to lie down. She partook of supper and retired, saying, "I shall be better." In the night Mrs. Moore was called to her bedside by Winifred's nurse. On coming to her, Winifred was unconscious

and soon sank into the last sleep. Oh, what should I have been if Winifred had been spared me! All the miracle days and hours of our association at Marshalltown came back to me — the walks, our talks. The beauty of her spirit caught me up in a vision like unearthly music. I sat as if in a spell. I came back to a realization of where I was — there in this luxurious apartment, in the presence of this kindly woman — I, in complete forgetfulness of myself, sobbing like a child. "My poor boy — my poor boy," said Mrs. Moore. Suddenly my tears dried, as rain ceases under a cold blast; for then an understanding of the truth that life is suffering opened up to me with a profound meaning and I resolved to endure. Yes: all hope, all plans, all intelligence and effort directed against the inevitable decree that life is pain, are spent only as the mere struggle of the human spirit, and for its development, perhaps — but to what end? I meant to go on resolutely, be the end what it might.

Mrs. Moore took me to the theater this night. And after that we heard many concerts; and I began to study music, not in its technique, but in its essence, its adumbration of the one reality. Hearing a sonata, with my attention fixed in this way, I followed the rise and fall of the composer's emotion; I even could feel with him the physical rhythm of his diaphragm, his nervous organization; and music, what is it but the sigh of the wind, the sonorities of waters, the reaction of man's spirit to the mystery, his breath and his pulsation performed in unison with the extroversion and introversion of the Great Intelligence unfolding, creating, and moving forever? With this key I listened to Beethoven, to Bach, to Wagner, to Mozart, to the whole list. And I owe to Mrs. Moore a debt of gratitude for giving me the opportunity to hear these masters with her — yes, under auspices which conjured the adored spirit of my Winifred.

But as music of the planets or the spheres played me many tricks, led me into heights where I grieved for infinite things, on a lower level it brought me to tangled ways, perhaps digressions. Yet I was now beginning to wonder if there be a

way; if all ways are not equally true; just as if one were swimming, compassless, in mid-lake, and land were the desideratum — any direction would be the right one.

And so while I was calling upon Martha Fisk, and enjoying the rare hospitality of Mrs. Moore; while I was hard at work on the land case, one day I received a call from Alicia Adams. She had fascinated me that night she came to play the piano to John Armstrong's fiddling. But I had not sought her out; or seen her in this interval of many months.

She came into my private office, and between embarrassed little laughs she told me of a letter she wished me to write to the mother of one of her pupils, who was owing a small amount for lessons given by Alicia. The matter was of no great moment, nor did it seem likely that the debt would not be paid without the assistance of a lawyer. I sensed the idea that Alicia had made this an excuse to try to see me. I accepted it as such, and invited her to go to luncheon.

She had to run off for an hour or two, but would meet me at a designated restaurant. The place was a new one to me. I found it snug, a delightful privacy in the atmosphere and appointments. I sat and studied Alicia; tried to fathom her large black eyes, brilliant yet opaque; I looked at her shapely hands as she let them rest on the table; and I saw that her most beautiful feature was her bosom — so virginal yet full, so delicate yet sensuous. And we talked of many things — of music and books. I gave her my idea for listening to a composition as the expression of emotion; the surge and resurge of the soul's incommunicable passion — and she said that I needed to know no more of music than I did to appreciate and enjoy it.

"Come to see me," said Alicia. "You know I live at the 'Parkside,' right near the drive. Harriet Perry lives with me. She knows your sister, too. You know I met Myrtle when I was East. I think she's quite the loveliest person I've ever seen. If you come up we'll have a jolly time."

We had had a cocktail, a glass of wine with the meal. Our senses were soothed, taking long breaths under the

influence of the stimulant. Alicia was smoking a cigarette. Well, I had seen this done before; I knew it was done. I had feasted and smoked with Julie Valentine. But Alicia was the first woman I had known, of high intelligence and a certain distinction, whom I had joined in these luxuries of free and happy spirits. We walked to the street together; she gave me a lovely smile at parting, which almost revealed depths in her inscrutable eyes. Then she walked away. I stood for a moment observing how slender her waist was, how delicate and shapely her hips. Then I went back to my office, carrying with me her spiritual fragrance, which clung to my thoughts during the rest of the day.

CHAPTER XLII

I CONTINUED to call on Martha; but I also called upon Alicia. Martha meant no more to me than a theorem. Alicia, by swift but sure processes, entangled me in a web of enchantment. I meant to marry Martha if I could; the farthest thought from my mind was to marry Alicia. I met Harriet Perry, Alicia's chum, in their apartment at the "Parkside." Harriet kept herself out of the way. She would stay long enough after my arrival to soften down an abrupt disappearance; then she would go and leave us to ourselves. Often Alicia would say, "She has gone for the night." Alicia and I read, smoked, drank together, though always sparingly. She had no excesses. She played the piano for me. Always I found such incisiveness in her speech, such understanding in her moods. She was quite my equal in experience; indeed many novelties to me turned out familiar things to her when I brought them up. The only flattery in her attitude toward me consisted in the fact that I was always welcome; that she was always delighted when we met. But no word came from her in compliment of my personality, my appearance, my achievements. The nearest she came to an expression of admiration were the words: "You are such a human being." Or at times she would shrug herself, gurgled a sort of satisfaction and press my hand. I had found before that I invited confidence and confidences. And it was not long, my third or fourth call, before Alicia told me quite frankly about her life. Her father was a lawyer still living. Her mother had died when Alicia was sixteen years of age. The father had been an alcoholic and left off drink; he had taken to chloral and given that up. "His will is

like steel," Alicia said. "He goes to the farthest excess with anything — then in a day stops. He left off chloral at once, and never went back to it. But he married a fiend of a woman after my mother died. And she treated my brother and me with horrible meanness,—brutality. At last I could stand it no longer. I took my brother, then but ten years of age, — I was nineteen, — and came to Chicago. I started to teach dramatics. After a year my little brother died — right in my arms one night — of meningitis. It almost killed me. But I have my father's will and I rallied. After a time my father's second wife died. Now he is alone. He practices law a little, sits about with the men and plays checkers. He writes me long letters, almost one a week. But I hate him — I write him, for I pity him; but I hate him too."

I wanted to ask Alicia why she had never married, — she was about 27 now — and surely whom could she not charm? Somehow, however, I felt a veil of reserve, of individuality, around Alicia which I could only penetrate by degrees. I never felt quite free to take liberties with her privacy of mind. But naturally, just the same, we were quickly on a romantic footing. I loved to be with her. She stimulated my mind. She engrossed my amorous powers. I was magnetized by her flesh, charmed by her voice. And she was as exquisite as Julie Valentine in all her ways of life, though living in a much less luxurious style.

One afternoon when we were together at her apartment, quite suddenly Alicia began to weep piteously. "Dear," I said, "what is the matter?" "You are just like all men," she returned between her sobs. "All you wish is my body. I had expected more beautiful things of you than that. You, a lawyer, a man who has read, who has had great opportunities in life — yet you are not different from the most ordinary rounder. There's only one thing you wish of me."

"No," I said quickly.

"Yes — just one thing."

"What do you wish of me?"

"I want you for a friend. I have no brother. I have told you about my father. I have no man friend in my life — not really a friend; and I had this hope of you. Here we have all these lovely communions together — and you spoil it by bringing everything to the one common end."

I looked at Alicia to make sure of her purpose, her sincerity. Her face was bathed in tears, her nose was red, her lips puffed and inflamed. I said to her, "I'll be your friend." "Oh, you just say that! You never could; it's beyond you." "On my word I'll be your friend — I'll never put my hand on you again. I'll be your friend." I said this, though there was running through my head the suspicion that Alicia was weeping for another man; or because she was on the threshold of accepting me as a successor to a departed lover. She ceased weeping, went to her room, returned with a fresh handkerchief, lighted a cigarette, and began to flick the ashes contemplatively. "Tell me," I said, "what is it to be a friend? I can understand what it is to be a friend to a woman with whom one has satisfied desire; but to be a friend to a woman for whom he has defeated desire, or for whom he has desire kept under control, — strangled and trampled, — that I do not understand."

Alicia looked at me and said: "You are such a human being, Skeet. Take my hand." I took it, held it tenderly between mine, bent my head, kissed her hand, and again studied her face. It came over me quite suddenly that Alicia's decision was to my advantage, the work perhaps of my star, my dæmon. "I believe I'll go," I said. I left and went to see Martha, who lived only a few blocks away.

And so I had Martha and Alicia in quick juxtaposition. Here was Martha so achromatic, neutral, sexless, voiced with such a monotonous treble; so pinched of personality, so incapable of reading me, or sympathizing with me in any way. And a few blocks away was Alicia, subtle and colorful, passionate, of recondite if not clandestine personality, capable of looking into my very thoughts, and made to be,

for me, one of the most charming mates, a wife of mutable moods, ever interesting psychologies. And it seemed to me that both of them could advance me along my way; Martha with her money and her tranquillizing mediocrity, Alicia with her spirit and the stimulus of her sex and her great vitality. I felt sure that I could marry Alicia, and fairly sure that I could marry Martha. And all the influences, Roger's, such as it was, my mother's words, Myrtle's tastes and ambitions, were on the side of Martha. I was almost on the point of proposing to Martha, when Mr. Fisk came in and I was invited to dinner. Thus within two hours of my parting with Alicia I was dining in the pietistic solemnity of the Fisk mansion.

The next morning there was a letter from Alicia at the office. It read:

"Dear Skeet: I am going out of town to be gone until Thursday. Harriet is taking me to the country to visit with some people. When I return I want to see you *very much*.

"Alicia."

I looked at the underlining and marveled; or rather I could extract but one meaning from that. I did not definitely decide at the moment whether to go to Alicia or not. Her letter was one of many. I had a big mail. I read the rest of it. Clients came in; the two old gentlemen in the land case. The next day was Wednesday, and a busy day. By Thursday Alicia's note had slipped my memory completely. Friday morning Alicia telephoned me. "Did you get my note?" I said, "Yes." I couldn't say I had forgotten to come. My whole life would have been changed, however, if I had been truthful. Instead I said, "Well, I was out of town yesterday—I meant to write you." She began to laugh and said, "Well, to-day is a day as much as yesterday." A thrill went through me. And I asked quickly, "May I come up?" "Yes," she answered; and in twenty minutes we were in each other's arms. Alicia was mine.

And on my part nostalgia and longing and measureless distress and even a kind of madness entered into me!

The next day I telephoned Alicia. I felt that I must see her. Harriet answered the telephone, saying that Alicia had gone to Indiana for a few days. And without letting me know! I was hurt, stirred with the beginning of longing. I stood her absence for three days; then I went to Alicia. I found her in a resort hotel by a little lake, in company with a woman friend. We had no privacy with each other, for Alicia took this woman with us everywhere. And I returned to Chicago half exhausted, in rebellion against myself that I had suffered this slavery to lay its first hand upon me.

Alicia came back in a few days, and I went to call. Harriet, contrary to her custom, stayed with us, went out to dine with us, came back, and sat the evening through. However, in about a week Alicia telephoned me, speaking the significant word that Harriet was away, and would be away for the night. And so I went; and all the late disappointments were healed in hours of ecstasy.

And yet when I came away from Alicia, I felt impelled to go to Martha, propose to her, and thus get away from Alicia. I could not analyze the presentiment, I could not hold under scrutiny the evidences, apparent, though scattered and unrelated, that I was getting farther into a trap. There was Alicia's charm, but also her incredible self-sufficiency; there was her yielding, but also her self-control, her ability to stay away from me; there was the flattery of her evident delight to be with me; but also the critical appraisal of my worth, which she indulged at times to the extent of the most penetrating irony and clairvoyance into my most secret processes of mind. I was fascinated by her, but in a sense afraid of her, afraid of being fearfully hurt by her; her amorous chemistry had an irresistible affinity for mine. Was this love? Did I love her? At times I felt that I must break with Alicia, go away and stay away from her. Then I would examine the details of our communions, our relation-

ship, and a masculine generosity would resolve all the doubts in her favor: she was a woman, coquetting; a woman in love, wishing to hold me; a woman who had given herself and must keep the gilt fresh and alluring. So I would go back to Alicia. And always she met me with her large black eyes, which seemed to take everything in, and with a smile so sweet that I was wholly reassured.

But there were occasions when I could not see Alicia. She had several men friends who called upon her. She dined out with them; she attended the theater with them. I was afraid to betray jealousy, to ask her much about them. I simply accepted what she wished to tell me. One evening, when I wished to come she said: "I'm going to the Columbia to-night with Wallace Reed." I decided that I would go, too, in order to verify her words. I was there. I searched the house with my eyes. Alicia had lied to me. By and by I saw Harriet in the second row with an escort, to whom she was gayly talking. But no Alicia — no Wallace Reed. I spoke to George about my troubled affairs. He had the hunter's eye both for game and for women. When I told him of Alicia's traits and ways as they had developed in our relation, he said, "I can tell you her most beautiful feature." "What is it?" "Her bosom." "Good Lord, George, how did you know?" "Well, I know this type of woman. She's a fox, and you never can trap her; you never can hold her after you catch her. She lies to you; she will always lie to you. You never can trust her." I thought to myself: "If a man is strong enough, a woman's lies, her tricks, are as brittle as straw; they are nothing. What is a child's lies and tricks? I'll master this woman or I'll quit her." My will was up, rearing itself heavenward like a great beam of steel.

But behold! Did Alicia lie to me? For when I next went to call, Harriet, who was in the room, but preparing to go out, went on to say that they had intended to make a party of four, at the theater, but that Alicia's beau was late in buying two tickets for himself and Alicia; and that

thus they were separated; Alicia and her beau being compelled to take rear seats in a box. "Yes," said Alicia, "a place secluded enough for spooning; and I didn't see much of the play, both because of our seats and because Wallace was in one of his riotous moods, and kept talking to me." Did Alicia lie to me? At any rate, I decided at last to propose to Martha Fisk.

CHAPTER XLIII

AND yet when I began to work out the dramatics of proposing to Martha, I seemed to be unable to go through the performance, unless I could go from Alicia's arms. Otherwise I feared I could not sufficiently put Alicia out of mind while uttering the words of proposal to Martha. Rousseau, in his "Confessions," throws the challenge at other men that if they would be as frank as he was, they would appear in a light no more admirable. And I utter the same challenge. I do not defend the baseness to which I descended in dealing with Martha Fisk; or perhaps with Alicia. I only mean to expose without mercy the processes of my own mind, the fluctuating movements of my will, the ambition that animated me, the fear and the apprehensions that were lodged somewhere in the recesses of my being as to Alicia. Accordingly I spent the afternoon with Alicia; and I went to Martha to ask her to be my wife.

Martha was dressed in her habitual gray; her hair was again tightened into a little knot; she talked in the same monotonous treble. And finally I swept away all the trivialities of this vapid interview. I began by calling her Martha, something I had never done before. She glanced at me rather quickly, then looked down. She was sitting near a large lamp, where I could see her face and the changes of its expression, so far as it changed. I was in the shadow, and well that it was so. For while I have been gifted with a mask, and had in various experiences fitted it and colored it to purposes of greater deceiving, I was not sure that even Martha could not at this moment read my mind.

"Martha," I said, "we have known each other for a good

while now ; and you have had a chance to observe me and to see whether I am the sort of man you could be interested in. My life in the club and as a practicing lawyer here is open to every one. Your father probably has heard a good deal of my activities ; and I came here through Roger Farnsworth, who is one of my best friends, and has been good enough to present me around to his friends and among his acquaintances. If you could find it in your heart to be my wife, I am sure I can be a devoted husband to you ; and I will do everything in my power to make you happy."

I felt ahead dimly for more words ; but there was nothing more to say. I was on the verge of repeating, overlapping what I had already expressed. I stopped, therefore. The room was still as a tomb. The noise of the traffic in the street was shut out by the heavy walls of this massive house. There was no clock to break the overflow and the spread of the silence around us. I studied Martha's face as it was set before me in the glare of the light under which she was sitting. She was looking down, her glasses a little tilted on her nose, her hands clasped awkwardly in her lap. With a little laugh and a quick glance at me she said : "I'll have to see my father about it. I'll have to ask him." "Will you?" "Yes." "When do you think I can know your decision?" "Well, this is Tuesday. Come to dinner Thursday. Father goes to missionary meeting after dinner that night. And we can talk it over again. Meantime I'll speak to him."

That was all. No tenderness, no longing in outstretched hands, in ecstatic embraces. But had I lied? Not by any word I said. Hypocrisy, however, was implicated in my proposal ; for Martha evidently took it to mean that I cared for her. And I didn't. And so I said good night, taking Martha's hand and pressing it reverently to my lips.

The next day I received a telephone call from Mr. Fisk to come to his office. I passed through a bevy of assistants, secretaries, and entered the room where the great capitalist planned and managed and from whence the commands of his brain radiated to many rooms and many parts of the

city. He sat in a light which brought into clear manifestation the waxen color and transparency of his cheeks, overlaid with light collops of sebaceous deposit.

His eyes were lucidly bright, but weary; his lips a purplish red; his hands thin and frail. I could see that the seal of death was upon him. His manner was serious and anxious. He began at once: "In regard to the matter which you broached to Martha, and of which she has told me, I am disposed to let her decide it for herself. There are a few things I'd like, however, to talk to you about. How does it happen that you are not a church member?"

"I have never got around to it, for one reason."

"Are you a skeptic?"

"I suppose you might say so."

"That's too bad; for I regret to see Martha denied a religious association in her married life."

"Do you drink?"

"Well, I take a drink. I don't drink in the sense of making drink a habit."

"Do you gamble?"

"No."

"Have you any vices?"

He didn't particularize; and as I couldn't call Alicia a vice I returned a negative to this question.

"Well, in regard to supporting Martha. How much are you making a year?"

"I think about \$3000. It varies, and business is growing better with me."

"You will have to live very simply on that. Of course in case of a marriage you could come to our house to live. I don't want to have Martha leave me; and if she were happy with you, your coming would add to the cheer of the house. Some arrangement can be made about that. I'll only add, Mr. Kirby, that it would be better if your progress in life took you into Martha's sphere, into a line of law practice more stable and — well — important or dignified. For, you see, a marriage is not the ceremony, but it is a living together

of people whose tastes, interests in life, ideals, friends, everything, draw people together, and do not draw them apart. But Martha is truly fond of you, and believes in you; and I would not stand in her way, even if I were disposed to do so."

"Well, Mr. Fisk, I'll say to you what I said to Martha: I'll do my best to be a good husband; and I think I come of stock whose word is reliable. I feel that I have ancestry that speaks for my integrity and my ability to prove my worth."

And after generalities about the topics of the day I went my way.

Here was my secret, and I needed some one to confide it to, in order to get a perspective on it. Next night I said to George, "Why have you never married?" "Because I know women too well; and therefore I can't get married unless I should find a woman that suited me all in all. For myself I want a woman who is a chum, a mate; she must be a mother and a courtesan; a good fellow, honest and fine; she must have passion and fidelity; I want her changeable, but constant in the main things. I've often said with Panurge: 'Shall I get married?' But I never say with him: 'And if I do shall I be a cuckold?' For I mean to take no chances. Say, what are you thinking of — marrying Alicia Adams?" "No." "Well, you'd better not." "No, I have a very different plan — I'm thinking of marrying Martha Fisk." George looked at me, his face spread into a huge grin; he chuckled, then laughed consumedly. "Skeeters Kirby! from Marshalltown! Gee! what a novel your life would make — and if you marry Martha, what a scream to end the novel with. Why, my God! To think of your getting into such a household. Old man Fisk is as desiccated as the dust in the tomb of Perneb; a Presbyterian, a prohibitionist, a capitalist, a law-and-order man, a believer in things as they are; a conservative, a product of the Christian journals, a church and state pillar; and you a blasphemer, a winebibber, a roaring blade, an antinomian of the antis, a turbulent rebel against the country and the

times; a product of Ingersoll and Emerson and philosophy. Oh! my God, Skeet, you can't imagine how funny this sounds — you the husband of Martha Fisk!" The tears rolled down his cheeks. "Well, you devil, you'll be fixed financially anyway. You'll have some twenty millions to play with. Maybe you can get a yacht and tour the Mediterranean and the Nile with some Cleopatra, and keep Martha ignorant of it — if so, all right." He laughed until my whole body flushed with shame, for I could feel that he knew that I had no romantic interest in Martha whatever.

I went on Thursday to dinner at Martha's. I could sense the fact that I was a subject of honor in the air of the occasion, in the attitude of Mr. Fisk and Martha. The dinner was better, more elaborate, than usual. Grapejuice and mineral water were served; and Martha was dressed more gayly. Mr. Fisk treated me with great courtesy; he was very attentive to me, asking me again and again to have more of this or the other of the viands. And then he went away to the missionary meeting, and left Martha and me to ourselves.

Though I knew what Martha's answer would be, it seemed the gallant thing to act and to speak as if I were in doubt. She was sitting again in the chair under the lamp; I was in the shadow of the room. "I hope you have considered what I spoke to you about, Martha. I have thought of nothing else since we parted. Have you thought of it? Have you considered it?"

"Yes."

"Have you spoken to your father about it? — Oh, I hope he is not unfriendly to me!"

"He isn't."

"You don't mean that he gives his consent — do you?"

"He leaves it to me."

Martha was looking down now, her hands playing nervously with the folds of her dress. Nearly the width of the room was between us. Neither passion nor reasoned decision could speak across this chasm. I saw that I must go to

Martha. I crossed the room, and stood above her, my arm resting above her head, as if in the formation of an embrace.

"Well, Martha, what do you say?"

"I've considered it — and I think I'll say yes."

My arm descended to her neck, and I drew her head to me, brushing off her glasses in the awkward process. She leaned her head against me, and I kissed her upon the brow. "When will we be married, Martha?" "Well, not for a year. I think that is best; my father does. We need to get better acquainted. And we won't announce it, because my father does not believe in such things; neither do I. But we will have some friends in, some dinners; and you may take me to church and the concerts; so that it will be known and accepted as a future event. I want you to become friendly with my friends, to get in with them, and with my father's friends, his business friends, for they will help you. And when we are married you are to come here to live. My father wants it that way; and I do. We have this huge house, with no one to use it but us; and there is no use of our finding a separate place. Besides, father is too old and too frail to leave. He is not at all well, and is ill of a trouble that is progressing, and I fear may take him away from me all too soon."

"Very well, Martha. I wish you to please yourself about these things. If you are happy, naturally that will increase my happiness."

And so I was engaged to Martha Fisk. She came to the door as I left. I took her gently in my arms and kissed her good night. And now I was expected to come at any time I chose. I was, in a sense, a member of the household. As I walked away I began to balance my advantage in marrying Martha with her advantage in marrying me. What is money that it is considered the essence and the summation of all precious things? Martha would soon be in the world alone. She would soon have the care of these millions. Was it worth nothing to her to have me as a friend, a companion in her life? Was it of no value to her that I could apply my

understanding and my experience to the protection and management of her interests? Whom could she pay to do this who would give it the interested attention that I would? And if Martha's fortune meant independence and power to me, and capacity to further happiness, had not Martha seen much in me as a husband and a protector, and as the father of her children? Did she not see in me the clean blood, the vital flesh, the sound nerves of my farmer ancestry, which harked back to the sturdy hunters and mountaineers of the pioneer days of the republic? At any rate she had accepted me. Her father, who was a brain, and a man of great capacity, had not stood in the way of Martha's wish, in spite of all my faults; in spite of all the lacks in my life which kept me below the level of his ideal as a husband for his daughter.

CHAPTER XLIV

IT was not long before I saw that I was compelled to pick my way with care as the fiancé of Martha. I could no longer be seen publicly with Alicia. We could not dine freely as we had done. I could not take her to the theater and to the concert without risk of meeting some friend of Martha's. For very soon Martha invited a company of people to meet me. And I saw in the drawing-room of my millionaire father-in-law to be the corpulent loungers of the club to which Roger had introduced me. I met them and their bediamonded wives. All now was changed, however. These old millionaires who had scarcely spoken to me at the club, no matter how often I was introduced to them, now smiled upon me, engaged me in sociable conversation. Martha gave dinners, too. And I overheard the women guests saying to each other: "Such a quiet, refined young man. So gentle looking, so pure. Just the husband for Martha." And no wonder they said such things, for I was in such a subdued state under the oppressive condition of the splendor about me, the wealth and the dignity which girded my affrighted soul, that I must have looked to them as they took me to be. If George could only have heard those remarks; or Julie Valentine, or Roger, or Alicia!

So to take Alicia to public places was now out of the question. I could not wreck my plans by a sudden meeting with some of my new-found friends. Yes, what would they think of Alicia's sloe black eyes, her self-sufficient, patrician, but worldly bearing?

And now that I could not safely escort Alicia to the theater

or dine with her, Alicia seemed to accumulate invitations for me to do so. Harriet and her beau were going to this or the other play. Get tickets for us! Meet me at such and such a restaurant! Finally I wondered if Alicia were plotting against me. Did she know of Martha? Did she wish to disrupt my relation with Martha? Did she wish to humiliate Martha by proving my disloyalty to Martha? Fear entered my heart. I thought it necessary to guide Alicia to a safe diminuendo. But, oh! there was desire.

The more I saw of Martha the less did I believe it possible that I could ever be bound to her in the flesh; the better did I see that Alicia held me by strands of fire. In these complexities of relationship and emotions I felt forced to yield to my desire to see Alicia — and frequently. It seemed the part of prudence, as it was the expression of my own pleasure, to keep Alicia's rooms filled with flowers, to send her gifts of books. Once when she asked me to get tickets for the theater I said: "Oh, yes, I'm so glad you reminded me." But at the last minute I telephoned her saying that I had been called out of town suddenly and was sending the tickets for her and Harriet. And I went out of town for the night. Thus I dodged around in the embarrassment of my predicament, in the flow and in the slavery of my desire for Alicia.

One morning I scanned the newspaper to read with amazement the announcement of Myrtle's engagement to Count Speranza of Rome. They had come into association at one of the Eastern resorts. And beneath it I could fathom my mother's ambition and its great satisfaction in this consummation. Alicia telephoned me about it, half proud and half satirical. I had not said a great deal to Martha about my mother and Myrtle. But now I expatiated upon their virtues and charms. I could see in Mr. Fisk's eyes a gleam of pride. And now this matter of my mother's great fortune made in oil, which I had totally ignored, in the overwhelming consciousness of my own poverty, came to my hand as color with which to shade away in the picture

of my alliance with the Fisk millions, the secret purpose I had to seek my own advantage. For was I not, too, living in the expectation of a great inheritance? My father wrote me the following letter:

"Dear Skeet: I suppose you noticed in the papers the announcement of Myrtle's engagement. Did you have any idea that this was on the tapis? I didn't. Don't you think Myrtle should bring the count to see the log house where she was born? Now what does this make you? Are you a count, too, or no count, as I am pretty much. Your mother had written me that they were going to Italy for an indefinite stay; but I didn't know this was on. Good luck to 'em. Davis is at Harvard, but his marks are not very good. John Armstrong was here last week and we had a good time. I won the Prescott case, at last, and have just got my fee of \$1500. But I am tired of everything here; wish I could join you in Chicago and go into partnership. How is business?

"Your father,

"H. K."

I now wrote my father of my engagement to Martha, telling him something of Mr. Fisk. And I added, "As soon as I get married, maybe before, I'll be in a position where I'll need some one as a partner in my office, and I want you to come and join me. You can live happily here — escape the monotony and the village, and get into an entirely new life."

My father wrote back, "I'm glad to hear of this, and I think I'll come up and see your girl."

He came; and Mr. Fisk was most hospitable to him, inviting him to stay at the house, which he did. He never looked more like a Greek god, more masterful. He was never more charming, more witty, or more gifted with apt anecdotes, quaint characterization and stories. He and Mr. Fisk seemed to be in harmony about many things, sharing that wisdom which is common to maturity or age,

no matter what difference may exist between men as to principle or programs. Mr. Fisk seemed quite delighted with him, asked him to return soon. And my own footing was strengthened; nor was it weakened by Myrtle's engagement to Count Speranza. There is nothing in the creed of law and order, prohibition or devotion to the church that forbids intermarriage with an Italian Count.

But all the while there was Alicia; and there was coming into my heart, at times, the feeling that I could not marry Martha. My deepest desire was not for money. Money was no more to me than treasure hunting with Mitch had been. Had I not learned that when I had the treasure, but Mitch was dead, that it was not the treasure, nor what I could buy with it that appealed to me; but it was the joy of hunting it with Mitch, and afterward spending it with him, that made the treasure desirable and a thing of joy? And now, what was treasure if I could not take delight in it with Martha?

And, on the other hand, whether it was the clandestine relationship between Alicia and me, forced upon me by my engagement to Martha, or whether it was Alicia's nature unaffected by that irritant, no less Alicia had the power to hurt me above all human beings I had known. At times her words dishonored me; there was in her attitude a spirit that disvalued me, that did not appreciate me. No wound is so deep as that which comes from a lack of appreciation from one on whom one bestows all gifts and all love. But was I doing this? Yes; for if Alicia did not know of Martha, and if she did she failed to manifest her knowledge, then the case between Alicia and me was just the same as if I had chosen her from among all women for my heart's interest and devotion. For I was seeing her frequently; I was sending her flowers and gifts; I was providing her with tickets to theaters; I went to her apartment and we were lovers. And even now and then I took the chance of dining out with her, especially if we could drop into a secluded place. Why did I do these things? Where was my sense of loyalty?

How could I be engaged to Martha, and continue my relationship with Alicia? Well, it was desire — or it was love for Alicia. Sometimes it seemed to me that I loved Alicia with all my heart. And then with swift acridity she would curdle all my sweetness, and I wanted to wound her, or to leave her forever. If in these little quarrels and separations she had followed me up, sought me out, I might have cured myself of her, made my escape. But she left me alone — even at times so long that the end seemed to have come. A kind of terror came over me when I reflected on the possibility of never seeing Alicia again, never again holding her in my arms. Then desire would come to me; and because I knew that she would receive me, I would go to her. She would be all gentleness again, her sloe black eyes gazing out from an ethereal brightness of soul — and the touch of her hands, the soft impress of her delicate flesh took me captive again.

CHAPTER XLV

IF there had been no letter from my father to Burke Gray, there had been no letter to Judge Harrison; no employment for me in the usury shop of J. Steele & Co.; no Barney Cohen and no F. W. Jones, and no consequences such as I now relate. Hail, Heimarmenê!

Barney Cohen entered my office one day breathless from fast walking and excitement. "I've just seen F. W. Jones! He's in town; and I want to tell you, he inherited a lot of money since he was here. His wife has money, too. Go over and get a *capias ad satisfaciendum* and make him pay you your judgment. I'll get him into my office where the sheriff can catch him. Go on now and make that dirty dog pay you for getting him out of the penitentiary. I'll telephone you what time I'll have him ready for you."

I rushed to the clerk's office and got the *capias*, came back with a deputy sheriff, who waited with me for the telephone call from Barney Cohen. At last it came. "He'll be here at two o'clock. I got him, pretending that I wanted to get him in a lumber deal — about buying the old building used at the convention."

I took the deputy sheriff to luncheon and then sent him to get Jones. True to Barney's word, the deputy found Jones there, arrested him and put him in jail. He was insane with rage, cursed Barney; while Barney followed him out to the street, laying upon him every vile name and characterization: thief, firebug, confidence man, swindler, snake, cut-purse. Jones was foaming with rage; tried to break from the sheriff to assault Barney, who was carrying a billet of wood and welcoming an approach that would give him a chance to use it.

Jones lay in jail overnight, and the next day he em-

ployed a young lawyer and petitioned the court to discharge him from prison, setting up that he was unable to pay my judgment, that he was not fraudulently withholding his money. I asked Mr. Dorsey to act for me, as he had already done in the case in which I got the judgment against Jones, and was thus familiar with the circumstances and the case. Mr. Dorsey was glad to represent me. And we had two days of a legal battle, in which Mr. Dorsey drove Jones' lawyer like a whipped pugilist around the arena of the case, and poured the vitriol of Irish wrath upon Jones. His cross-examination of Jones was a marvel of skill and concentrated attack. He pumped questions at Jones so fast that Jones' crooked mind broke down. He had to confess that he had inherited money, that his wife had money. And as it came out that my judgment was upon a note given for my fee, for the arduous service of procuring Jones release from the penitentiary, the court was visibly indignant, and promptly remanded Jones to prison, there to stay until he should pay me, or be otherwise lawfully discharged.

Mr. Dorsey and I dined together; and as it furnished an opportunity to see Alicia safely I telephoned her to join us. The conversation was mostly concerning the case; and I told of my trip to Mt. Vernon, my return to the prison; how Jones was taken back under guard; about the court holding in session for us to arrive; of Jones' tears and gratitude at the time. Alicia was highly entertained. She was fiercely indignant over the wrong done me: "He should be killed — such creatures do not deserve the gift of life."

The matter seemed now approaching an end. And I was waiting, expecting hourly that Jones would prove penitent in jail, that some lawyer acting for him would walk into my office with a check for me. But character or will — which is it orders these things otherwise? Jones was made the more obdurate by what I had done, the more firmly determined not to pay me. And at about noon of the next day after Jones was removed to prison I received a telephone call

to come to Judge Holly's court. I sent word to Mr. Dorsey and we met there. Here was Jones sitting with a triumphant smile on his face! Beside him was a leading lawyer of the bar and another lawyer acting as Jones' counsel.

This Pharisee was a constant contributor to law journals on such subjects as professional ethics and respect for the courts. And at the influential bidding of this hypocrite the court, without notice to me, without hearing from both sides, had enlarged Jones on a petition of *habeas corpus*. "Why did we get no notice?" asked Mr. Dorsey, with a tone of asperity. "It is not necessary, Mr. Dorsey. The court has only enlarged him for the time, pending a hearing; and on his promise that in the meanwhile he will do his best to pay this judgment." Mr. Dorsey said: "This man is just a common knave, a dead-beat; and I can't believe your honor would have done this if you had known the facts." "I have set the hearing for ten days from to-day," said the court; "then you can advise me of all the facts." "What is the bond meanwhile?" asked Mr. Dorsey. "His own recognizance," replied the court. "The amount of the judgment is small, and you say he is well able to pay it. If so, his own recognizance is sufficient." Mr. Dorsey said: "That is not satisfactory at all; and I now move your honor to fix a bond of at least \$1000 and to require ample security." "No," said the court, "I have ruled. There are dozens of lawyers waiting here to have matters heard, and you must step aside. Call the next motion, Mr. Clerk."

We walked out of the court room disgusted, followed by Jones, who was laughing and talking with his counsel. When we got to the hallway, Mr. Dorsey turned to Jones' lawyers and said angrily, "Why did you not notify us?" Jones stepped up with clenched fists, his face livid with rage. "You've abused me about enough," he said, and struck at Dorsey. Dorsey struck back, knocking Jones down. Jones got up and came for Dorsey. Dorsey knocked him down again. Jones' lawyers interfered. I struck one,

then the other, sending them reeling this way and that. Again Dorsey knocked Jones down. He began to whimper. He got up. Dorsey followed him up and kicked him to the bottom of the first flight of the stairs. Jones' counsel had suddenly disappeared somewhere. Presently a bailiff came hurrying into the hallway, followed by Jones' lawyers. The bailiff took Mr. Dorsey and me into custody, and brought us before the court. The president of the bar association stood before the court and said: "Your honor, a most disgraceful altercation has occurred in the hallway, a contempt of court committed practically in the presence of the court. This young man struck me and my associate. Mr. Dorsey, of whom I would expect better things, assaulted my client and has beaten him like a bully." "Is this true?" said the court, looking at me. I was in a high rage, in a fierce courage. "Yes, your honor — and I take the responsibility for all of it." "Very well!" said the court, with a frigid intonation. "This afternoon in jail from two to six will cool you off." "We take an appeal," said Mr. Dorsey. "There's no appeal from this kind of an order," said Jones' lawyer. "Oh, yes, there is," said Mr. Dorsey. "I don't want an appeal," I said. "If, after the service I rendered this scoundrel, I am to be treated this way, I rather rejoice in it."

"What penalty does your honor lay upon Mr. Dorsey?" By this time Jones had reëntered the court room, his face smeared with blood, his eyes blue and black and half closed. The court looked at Jones, then held up a hand as if balancing a scale, and said: "I think I'll leave the case just where it is, except I'll postpone the hearing of this *habeas corpus* for thirty days instead of ten days."

The bailiff took me into custody and lodged me in jail. On the way to the jail I passed a bookstall. Asking a moment's leave from the sheriff, I bought a copy of Milton's essays to read in my cell. Thus I spent the afternoon. On emerging from prison, I bought an evening paper. It was headlined: "Arthur Kirby jailed for contempt." Now I was notable.

When the thirty days had expired, Jones had flown — and I never heard of him or saw him again. I paid Mr. Dorsey \$100 for his services and called the matter at an end. The case had cost me \$300 in money, many days of time, and my most precious energies. Truly the cheese in the trap was bitter and full of maggots!

CHAPTER XLVI

WHILE my law business was increasing and even improving, probably because of my engagement to Martha Fisk, I was not making money as fast as I wished. But on the other hand, I could see that opportunities were opening to me. In the first place Mr. Fisk had made me the secretary of one of his companies, and a director in some others; and the wise old millionaires at the club smiled on me as a new acquisition to their faction in the city's life. And why not? For I didn't have a definite conviction that kept me out of their coterie. I loved elegance and beauty; I loved good food, soft bedding, pictures and tapestry, rich rugs. My memories of Julie Valentine were altogether lovely, just because she had an eye so artistic to exquisite life. My soul was turbulent and I had known poverty and something of the shame that attends it; and I had suffered deprivations, of a sort — but in the country, where such things do not engender ideas of socialization, as want and squalor do in the irritating congestion of the city. I had come by a way of labor with my hands, from the type case, and the boarding house; and yet I had no hatred of these capitalists on the score of their wealth. Their unenlightenment, their obscurantist principles, their dullness, stupidity, middle-class materialism, their adherence to things as they are, because of their otiosity and their fears, did, however, excite my inner contempt. And when they came about me, offering me entrance on the ground floor of profitable investment and rich speculation, I could see that their motive was to win my friendship, in the expectation that I would return the favor, some way, when I should have control of Martha's millions.

Thus it was that I took the \$3750 I had made through Cavette Errant, and the \$3000 which I had made on the case John Armstrong sent me, and bought stock in a large reorganization of several corporations; that is, to supplement these sums, I bought it on my note planning to use the dividends and the increment in payment of the stock which was set over to me. And why was it that while my father had led me from Burke Gray to Barney Cohen, as I have already detailed, he also led me from John Armstrong to a fortune of \$80,000? For my stock came to that in just a few months. In order to be safe I sold out half of my holdings, and bought bonds and mortgages. Why, I repeat, did my father's esoteric influence lead me to good luck, by more than half; while my mother and Myrtle either meant nothing at all to me in my movements in life, or else brought me to annoyance or discomfiture? Here is an equation in soul dynamics of difficult analysis.

The evening I got out of jail I went at once to see Alicia, as the person who would be most understanding and comforting. She had seen the headlines in the newspaper. Her indignation was a support and a strength to me; it made manifest a nearness and a friendship which I had not seen in her attitude before. "I don't like this — I don't like to have your name published in this way — but after all it will make no difference — it will blow over." She had supposed that the proceedings that removed Jones to jail had ended the matter to my complete success. I had to explain to her what had followed, and how I happened to be jailed.

Alicia was in so tender and sympathetic a mood that I felt encouraged to say to her: "I don't belong in this sphere at all. It isn't that I am not strong; a Swiss watch is strong but you can't run a town clock with it. I have got into the wrong pew in life — not that I don't enjoy the service, but it's not my pew." "What do you wish to do, Skeet?" "Oh, I wish to read, to grow intellectually, to enjoy myself, to write, perhaps." "Well, why don't you?" she asked. And why didn't I? I was worth perhaps

Myrtle's letter! She had taken the pains to stigmatize Alicia with some sort of mysterious obliquity in life or in character; but without giving me the chance to judge of its gravity, or even its nature.

Was I in love with Alicia? Certainly I found more delight with her than with any one else. The powers of her mind were equal to Winifred, though she was not so gifted; she was more exquisite than Julie Valentine, because not so voluptuous. She had a sense of proportion in matters of life, a taste in books, in music, a certain patrician point of view, that gave me the greatest happiness. And her self-reliance, her independence of spirit, commanded my respect. And if she had as much power to hurt me as Winifred ever had, though Winifred never exercised it, did not that bespeak my attachment to her? Above all, Alicia encompassed her spirit with certain inaccessible ramparts; I could never feel that she was wholly mine. Our intimacy signified nothing on this score.

She emerged from my arms, having surrendered her sensuous being alone. Her will and her undiscovered personality remained wholly within her own hands. She did not in any way change her life because of our relationship. I was not always sure of being received by her. Her plan in life went on practically undisturbed by the fact that she admitted me to the privacy of her life. She had other men friends. She carried on a correspondence with two or three. She received gifts from them. Were they on the same footing with her as I? Was it to this that Myrtle alluded in her letter? And when I reflected upon the matter I could not decide whether I was in Alicia's confidence or not. She had told me of her girlhood, her father, with an amazing frankness. And on the other hand so much of her seemed enveloped in mystery and in reticence.

Was I in love with Alicia? At any rate I kept up my relationship with her. My thought was that my marriage to Martha would spell its natural termination. In the interval, for one reason or another, I did not free myself

from it; though at times when she would cut me with her subtle divination into my spiritual processes, or wound me with her sharp irony, or her unanswerable smiles of superior power, I felt myself impelled to walk away from her, and forever. Then I would come back. She had captured me and I could not break the chains.

One day she said to me: "You cannot come any more." I was terrified at the sinking sensation which these words gave me. Striving to betray no concern, I asked calmly, "Why?" "Well, everything must end for that matter. I am thinking of going away. But if I don't, you can't keep coming here without creating gossip." "But you have other callers." "Yes, but not on the same footing. The real nature of a friendship leaks out after a while. It can't be kept a secret. But there is something else more important still." "What is that?" "Your attitude." "What is my attitude?" "Well, it isn't exactly rough, or reckless, or disrespectful of my personality. But these things are in a way implied in your attitude, and have been from the first. You treated me at the beginning as a conquest, something to capture; and now you treat me at times as a possession." Alicia stood before me saying these words in the manner of an accuser, not as one who complained. Her eyes were large and calm; her voice strong and direct; her spirit masterful.

I had spent the afternoon with Alicia not long after this conversation, leaving the "Parkside" at about six. I had bought a cigar at the stand in the lobby of the hotel; and just as I emerged on the street I came face to face with Mr. Fisk. I was startled, as he seemed to be too. I blurted out: "I'm just going over to see Martha." No sooner had I said the words than their unconvincing sound made me more embarrassed. I did not come this way to Mr. Fisk's mansion, but always up the Lake Shore Drive. Besides, the cigar I was smoking! At any rate, it was evident I had just lighted it. Consequently I had just bought it, and where? Naturally in the "Parkside." Or if I had taken

it out of my pocket and lighted it, why I had been — where? I could not analyze the appearances freed from my own consciousness of guilt. I said no more, therefore, to Mr. Fisk in explanation of being where he met me. I walked on with him talking of other things. When we arrived at the house Martha was not there. She had gone out to dinner. Therefore she was not expecting me!

I had to make the best face of things I could. "I should have telephoned Martha," I said, "but I thought she would be in." Mr. Fisk invited me to dinner; and we sat alone together struggling with what seemed to me an unmanageable conversation. At about nine o'clock Martha came in. "Why, Skeet," she said, the first thing, "have you been here? It's awfully nice you came to keep father company. Why didn't you let me know you were coming?" The sailing became easier now. Mr. Fisk retired, leaving us to ourselves. I forgot the misadventure at the "Parkside" before the evening passed. But what would become of it?

CHAPTER XLVII

THESE things occurred when my engagement to Martha had progressed about ten months. I had fallen into the course of life of oscillating between Martha and Alicia. When I wished to be most at ease with Martha — that is, not distracted in her presence for thinking of Alicia — I went to see Alicia, and then went to Martha; and when I was annoyed, or vexed or run down by the game of life, or half desperate from the mangling grinders and choppers of the law, I went to Alicia for re-creation and sustention. Sometimes I found her irritable, spent, resenting her own fate; sometimes with tears in her eyes. She was wholly devoted to her work, though she found the nervous strain more at times than she could bear.

I was prosecuting my land case with varying success. It had many angles to it; many preliminary motions were made in it along the way. And a motion in a litigation is like a skirmish in a battle, which sometimes affects the military plan as a whole. An adverse ruling in a motion may necessitate the reformation of the line, or require redoubled effort to repair its injury, if it cannot be rebuilt as an entirety.

One evening when I was in a worry over a defeat in the land case I went to see Alicia. "I'll go out and get some things. Let's cook supper here." She was willing to do this. She was in one of her calm moods, powerful and self-possessed. I told Alicia my trouble, inviting her sympathy. She looked at me with her large eyes and said: "I don't understand your mind, your desires. You speak at times as if you had some kind of great career before you which you could fill, if you could only free yourself from your present

life. Well, why don't you? It is one part of greatness to free one's self from trammels and obstacles; and the other part is to go on and carry out your plans after you have made opportunity for them. Sometimes I think you are very conceited." "What about?" "I don't know." With one stroke Alicia mowed my pride to the earth. It withered before me. This was her way of speech, when she chose to use it. All the time she was going about serenely in the preparation of our supper. There was so much of truth in what Alicia said to me. That was its power. For after all I aspired, I hoped, but I had not achieved. And hence what had I to be proud about? Then there was the money I had made. It meant leisure for me, if I only had the vision and the will to use it. But on the other hand there was Martha. If I was to be her husband, I could not rest on a fortune of \$80,000. I could not give up my business while the prospect of marrying Martha existed. Her father would not understand it. He would disapprove it without a doubt. In my reading days at Marshalltown I had studied Ribot's "Diseases of the Will." I began to wonder; was my will suffering from some cachexy? Or was I just a living thing trying to send my roots into the best soil for their growth; and my branches into the sunniest and most favored spaces?

Eventually I had talked to Martha about my afternoon in jail, explaining how it came to pass. I could see that she had no understanding of it. How did I happen to deal with such a client as Jones? Why would the court treat me so, if I was in the right? These wonderings I could divine in her silent manner; but if her father knew anything about my imprisonment he said nothing of it to me. It is possible for an item like the one about me to be missed by some of one's friends. He may have overlooked it. I had given Martha a valuable solitaire for an engagement present; and just because Alicia was seeing me more frequently these days I made my devotion to Martha more pronounced and found it easier to do so. A composition of sex and intellect in a woman may be a source of constant interest, and great

delight, when it is delight; at the same time the other effects sting like a penetrating lotion. In Martha I found peace. I was quieter with her. She did not search me out in my intellectual hidings and spiritual megrims and veerings. After all was she not the wife for me?

One day I received a telephone message from Mr. Fisk's secretary to come to his office at three o'clock. I could not imagine what he wished to see me about. Was it new business? A new directorship? Was it about Cavette Errant, whom he would naturally fear and despise? Had he at last heard of my imprisonment? Had he heard of the speculation in which I had made \$80,000? Did he disapprove of it? Was I managing the land case satisfactorily to him, since he stood sponsor for me in sending the old gentlemen to me with it? Had he heard of Alicia? Had his mind begun to stir from seeing me come from the "Parkside" that evening? And had he investigated my presence there, or discovered my habit of going there? The "Parkside" was like the "Traymore" where Julie Valentine was living with Thad Hilburn: it had tenants of impeccable life and tenants whose external ways were beyond reproach, but who were mysterious in the circumstance that nothing was known of them. And if I was paying a call to some one in the "Parkside," who was it? And why should there be a secret about it, if there was no dishonor in it?

I was prompt in going to Mr. Fisk's office, and I was admitted at once. Secretaries and associates gathered up their work and left us alone. The door was closed. Mr. Fisk was sitting where the light shone through him, making his sallow face transparent; and the light fell upon me so that it gave him full opportunity of searching my thoughts. He faced me with wonderful intellectual courage, although his head was shaking a little. His eyes were astonishingly clear and penetrating.

"Mr. Kirby," he said, "I have at last arrived at a decision that I must communicate to you. I do nothing in haste, nothing without full consideration. And in this matter

I have been thorough and patient. I told you when you first came to me about my daughter, that I wished her to make her own choice, and I do yet — she has ; but it comes to a revocation of what she has done. In explanation I could say, and stop, that this alliance is not fitting ; it is not blest in any way, and it cannot be. One cannot always tell at the start about these things. But now it is clear to me that your raising and environment, your outlook, your way in life, your tastes and temperament, are so wholly different from hers that you cannot be happy together. You are a young man of ability ; and the young fancy that the old, such as I am, do not observe keenly, that games can be played around them that they do not follow. But it is not true ; if it were, men of your age would rule the world, instead of preparing to rule it. For if judgment, understanding, mind, were added to energy, speed, tirelessness, nothing could stand against them. I said I could stop with saying that you and Martha belong to different spheres in life ; but I'll go a little farther ; I do not like the notoriety you achieved in the Jones matter ; your imprisonment and the newspaper comment on it. And you were much misadvised if you supposed you could speculate, give notes for stock, which is about the same thing, and in an enterprise financed by my friends, without knowledge of it coming to me. And if that is your tendency, as it seems to be, you are not the man to have the management of Martha's fortune. In short this engagement should never have been ; but it is better to end it, though it is embarrassing and perhaps painful to do so, than to let it go to a marriage and a lifetime of unhappiness. In spite of the fact that these words are painful to you, I trust your reason will finally accept them as a true verdict in the situation ; and I am sure I wish you well ; and if I ever can befriend you, you can come to me without hesitation."

He ceased, and began to finger the papers on his desk. I had followed him, thinking of answers to each point as he made it. But now the whole matter was before me ; and I did not know what to say first. My independence, my

pride, were first to assert themselves. "Very well," I said, "if you have resignations of the secretaryship and the directorships with which you have honored me, I'll be pleased to sign them." "Send them in later — any time within the next few days."

I tried to think of something else — there was Martha, of course. Was I to go away after an engagement of ten months with no word of parting? I said: "May I see Martha for a few final words?" "Well," said Mr. Fisk, "she has gone out of town for a number of weeks. I have a note from her to you, and a package." He handed them to me. Indeed, these two had considered everything. I was confronted with a completed program; and I was not confronted until it was complete. It was all so cold-blooded; as passionless as Martha's talk on chemistry.

I said a few incoherent words of general import and went from his office.

It was after four. The business day was all but ended. On the streets there were evidences of the increased traffic and stir at this time of home-coming. And my nerves were shaking. My heart was not wounded; my manhood was affronted, dishonored. Who was Martha Fisk, or her father, that they should not be proud to go through with the marriage? On the first point, if I was willing to marry her, why should our disparities influence them against it? Who had the more to lose, Martha or I? She was cold, of a low nervous organization. What was a disharmony to her compared to what it was to me? Oh, yes! The millions, they were the things that would suffer in untoward circumstance! And how unjust to bring up against me my imprisonment, which I had suffered through the most infamous ill luck! And the speculation, which was nothing but an investment, which I had paid for with my note, and in the expectation that the increase in the stock would liquidate my note, which it had done. All of these things I thought of. And I could have overwhelmed Mr. Fisk with argument. But there was no chance. He did not call me to a confer-

ence, but to a condemnation. My anger increased. I was in rebellion against Mr. Fisk and all his kind. I was ashamed of myself for ever entering into this engagement. I felt soiled. Was I not properly punished now for doing it? Had I not received the due recompense of all my double dealing, all my departure from the path that was mine in life, all turning away from my star and the voice of my dæmon?

I went into a saloon, ordered a brandy, opened Martha's note, and read :

"Dear Mr. Kirby: Father will tell you in person what we have arrived at, after the most careful consideration of everything. And therefore nothing is left for me to say, except to wish you well, and to join with him in the conclusion that the breaking of our engagement is the best thing for both of us, and dictated by the wisest considerations. If I thought it useful I should see you in person to say these things; but in the haste of going away I find my time greatly occupied, and as the point is to end our engagement, the less talk about it the better. With all good wishes,

"Martha Fisk."

I opened the package. There was the solitaire in the box in which it had come! The brandy gave me equilibrium; it awoke my sense of humor. I began to laugh — laugh at the preposterous position which one phase of me had got me into — laughed at myself — laughed at the Fisks. I took two more brandies and went to see Alicia!

CHAPTER XLVIII

AND why should this be? Alicia was overjoyed to see me! She flung up her arms with a cry of delight. She had a case of nerves from a hard day. Her dramatics wore upon her at times until she was ready for tears, or for madness to get out of herself. "I've been thinking of you all day," she said. I took Alicia in my arms. She grew very tender, the tears came in her eyes. "Skeet, I want to kill myself at times. I just work and work. I'm exhausted to-night." "Do you love me?" I asked. She pressed me tighter. "Why don't you speak?" She disengaged herself and flung herself upon the couch, face down. She turned her head, exposing one eye, whose brilliant animation studied me. It was the eye of the Masonic symbol set in the mystic triangle. I leaned over in my chair, looking at her intently. "Do you love me?" I asked again. A tear slipped out of the corner of her eye, and rolled on to the pillow.

Then I began to think: here is a woman, of somewhat mysterious life; but isn't my life mysterious, isn't it impleached with thickets growing in every direction? Has she done anything that I have not done over and over again? Is there anything but the absurd deductions of non-livers and moralists to the idea that men and women are on a different footing in the matter of living to the full; or that women incur spiritual consequences different from men in that course? Besides, what was Alicia's life? Had I ever really caught her in a deception? My deceptions were many. I had gone on for months in a double life of atrocious baseness. Then I began to think of Alicia's temperament,

her moods, her sharp tongue, her way of hurting me. But why not? Had I not dishonored her? Had she not said to me that my attitude was repugnant to her feelings, her womanhood? If she did not love me why had she continued so long with me in this intimacy? And having continued so long, was not my failure to ask her to marry me a degradation to her, speaking nothing less than that I intended to use her? How had she tolerated it? As for myself, if I did not love her what was my feeling? I admired her in every way, nearly. She was an unfailing source of delight to me. Her mind kept me attached to her. I was tied to her by emotional ties that I had tried in vain to shake off. As a mate, she held me more firmly than any woman I had ever known.

And Alicia was lying there tired and depressed, the great tears falling from her eye to the pillow. In a flood of emotion I kneeled by her. "Do you love me?" I asked. Her head inclined almost imperceptibly, rasping the pillow slightly. And her eye was still upon me. I took her in my arms, kissing her upon the cheek. "Will you marry me, Alicia?" She buried her face into the pillow, hiding her eye. A tremor went through her body. Then she was quite still. After a little space, her shoulders shook; then a sob came from her throat. "Don't, Alicia! don't!" I held her close to me. "I love you, I want you to be my wife — be happy, if this means happiness to you. We will be married at once — to-morrow — and we'll take a little trip — we'll go to see my grandmother — and I'll show you the beautiful country I knew as a boy. Go down to-morrow and get whatever you need, and we'll be married. Will you, Alicia?"

She sat up on the couch resting her arm stretched at an angle on the pillows. Her black hair was tumbled over her face. Her great eyes had grown soft, full of tender lights. Her cheeks were flushed. She slipped softly from the couch, stood in the middle of the room, fastening her disordered hair, her face half averted, half turned from me. I

approached her, put my arms around her waist; then I took her face between my hands and scanned her eyes. A smile began to play with them; her lips parted in an expression of joy and fulfillment. "Do you love me, Alicia?" "How can you ask — after all that we have been to each other? I have always loved you, Skeet, from the first. You did not love me, though. If you had you would have sought me out. Instead I came to you. Why did I do so? Why? Do you think I could do such a thing if I did not love you? And, as I have said to you, your attitude has not been right toward me. It has made disharmony for us. It has made me bitter, and sometimes sarcastic toward you. Let me look at you, to see if you love me. You do, don't you? I can see it in your eyes. So often I have seen it, but it passed. Now it burns with a fire that does not die. Yes, you love me, Skeet. And, oh, I love you."

"Will you marry me?"

Alicia had hidden her head on my shoulder. She inclined it in assent against me. "To-morrow?" I resumed. Again she moved her head in assent. Our ardor had burned away from me all trifling speculations. There was the ring in my pocket which I had given to Martha. Yet had I not found myself merging one experience into a larger one, one relationship into a richer one? I had bought this ring for Martha, who meant nothing to me; I could give it now to Alicia, who had always meant many things to me. The indelicacy of the transference of the ring from one woman to another was blotted out by the light in which I now stood with Alicia, consumed by the fervency of our mingled beings. I put my hand into my pocket, got the box, and pressed it into her hand. "This is for you, dear, and I am so happy that I got it to-day, and that I bring it to you now. Look!"

I disengaged myself from Alicia. Leisurely and with an intuition of what the box contained Alicia opened it. The tears flowed down her cheeks, but with scarcely any movement of the muscles of her face. She looked at me in wonder, with speechless delight. Then she walked from the room.

I heard a door close. I sat down, trying to synthesize the whirling events of an hour. But my mind refused to work. I only knew what I had done.

In a few minutes Alicia returned to me. She was dressed, her face was free of tears, flushed and radiant. And on her finger was the ring. "It is a wonderful stone, Skeet. What an odd creature you are. After all this time — to do this. Why to-day? Yet how fitting — for on no other day should I have consented so willingly to marry you. And why go buy the ring before you knew my decision?"

"Oh, well, I could have taken it back."

"Just the same, you should know that I might love you and be all that I have been to you and not marry you."

"Could you?"

"Why, of course! How can you tell, really tell, whether you want to marry any one without living with them first?"

This was not a new doctrine to me; but I was startled to hear Alicia utter it. "So you know now, do you?" "Yes, I'm pretty sure — but why make a killing matter even of marriage? If we don't make it go, we can quit." "Assuredly! And now what do you think of a nice dinner, a bottle of champagne; then I'll go home to George, and look after a few things. And in regard to the ceremony. I'll get a license as soon as the clerk's office opens. Who shall marry us?" "Get some judge." "Very well, then you can get your shopping done in time for the six o'clock train." "Yes, I need only a few things. I want to get a hand-bag." "Very well. Get whatever you choose. I'll go with you. And we'll have a happy week in the country."

Alicia's whole nature suddenly transformed itself. Everything hard in her gave way to tenderness, to confiding gentleness. She was completely happy, as I was. We pledged each other in wine. We talked rapidly of many things. We planned a little about a place to live; she wanted me to come to her apartment; she would send Harriet away. At ten o'clock I took Alicia to her door, kissing her good night. "At the clerk's office at nine o'clock."

"Yes, Skeet."

And I went my way. George was not home. The apartment was dark and lonely. I went to bed, tried to think my life over, and fell asleep in the vain attempt of trying to understand it.

CHAPTER XLIX

ALICIA was at the clerk's office promptly. Her face was like a child's, as it was sometimes, full of gladness and expectation. We got the license, went before a judge and were married. Then I went out with Alicia to shop. She was inclined, by force of habit, to economize, to buy the next best thing to the article she wanted. "No, my dear, get the best." Alicia pressed my hand. "You're so dear, such a generous heart." "No, get what you want, Alicia." And Alicia bought a jacket, and gloves, and a pretty hat, and a hand-bag. I turned to a counter and presented Alicia with some exquisite handkerchiefs.

At last she had provided herself with all she wanted. We lunched together. By that time the newspapers had an item about our marriage. Alicia was glowing with happiness. She had taken her place by my side; my name was hers. Society could not reject us as rebels against its customs. She was now a sharer in all that I was or could be. But she said, "I must tell you, Skeet: I won't give up my teaching. I think it best. It will occupy me. Only I won't work at it so hard as before. I like a little money that I make myself. And I have a lot of artistic friends that I wish to keep in touch with. You know already that I believe in an independent life in marriage. No strangling alliances. Freedom for me — and above all freedom for you will be best."

We arrived in Petersburg in the night. And the next morning before driving to the farm, I walked about the familiar square with Alicia, pointing out to her the spots of my exploits as a boy; where Mitch and I had met, or fought

the O'Brien gang; where my father had had his office; the old Menard House where Lincoln stopped; and we drove out of our way to look at the spot where Old Salem had stood. The mill that Mitch and I had known had burned down; even the dam was broken and decaying. Alicia was greatly interested, and very happy. I introduced her to people as we met them. We bought some presents for grandma. Then we started for the farm.

"There it is," I said, with a thrill, as we got to the top of the hill, from where Mitch and I had seen it on that long ago Sunday, when we walked out from Petersburg, singing and throwing clods along the way.

My Uncle Henry was on the side porch. "This is my wife, Uncle Henry." Uncle Henry looked surprised, but in a mild way took Alicia's hand. "How's grandma?" "Didn't you know?" "What?" "Grandma has been in bed five weeks now. She gave way, a kind of stroke, one day crossing the room; and she's never been up since, and never will be." "Isn't that funny father wouldn't write me? Well, of course we can see her." "Oh, yes, just go right in. Maggie may be in there. That's the girl that does the work now, and takes care of her; but go right in. How long you goin' to stay?" "Oh, a day or two." "No time for a hunt at Blue Lake?" "Hardly, this time!"

We went in. As we passed through the dining room I could hear the sound of grandma's music box; the poor little instrument of three tunes, run by clockwork, with a roller of steel bristles which plucked the musical tongues as it revolved. I stepped to the door and knocked. Alicia, eager and happy, was standing directly back of me. "Is that you, Henry?" grandma asked. "No, it's I." "Skeet? Come in here, you scamp." I went in. "You dear man," said grandma, throwing her arms about me. "Come in, Alicia," I said. And Alicia entered. She looked so wistful, like a child. My heart was full of happiness. "This is my wife, grandma." "What, have you gone and got a wife? Come here, let me see you." Alicia approached the bed; grandma

took her hand. "You're a sweet-looking woman. Kiss me, dear." And Alicia stooped and pressed her lips on the rosy cheek of this ancestor of mine, who, though in the nineties, was still black of hair, still in vigor of mind, and with a certain youthfulness of face, in spite of years and paralysis. "What's your name, dear?" "Alicia." "What an odd name! I don't believe I ever heard it before. And so you and Skeet are married? Well, I'm glad. It's time he was married. And how old are you?" "Twenty-seven." "That's time — but land, they don't marry young like they used to. I was twenty-three when I was married. And that was old for them days — lots was married then at sixteen and even fourteen. Well! well! how long have you known each other?" "Almost two years." "That's long enough. If people don't know each other well enough to marry by that time, they never will."

Alicia had gone into the drugstore at Petersburg to buy her present for grandma. It was a bookstore too. The only book that seemed worth taking along was a life of Andrew Jackson; and Alicia bought it. I was on the jeweler's side of the drugstore selecting a pair of gold spectacles. And now Alicia brought forth her book and handed it to grandma. "I've brought you this, grandma." "Well, you precious child. You shouldn't have brought me anything. I don't need anything. What is it?" Grandma looked at it. She could see large letters without glasses. "Life of Andrew Jackson," she said to herself. "Well, if that ain't queer. I was thinkin' of Old Hickory, just the other day; and I remember seeing him — Oh, my darlin', it's seventy years ago. Well, dear, I believe if there's any book I'd enjoy it's this. I've read the New Testament through eleven times since my husband died; and I read it now just here and there, when I want something to read. I'll not read it through any more. It's good anywhere to dip into."

Grandma's spectacles were lying near her on the counterpane, steel-rimmed, the lenses apparently not much better

than window glass. "Try these glasses, grandma." And I brought my gift forth. "Mercy me, Skeet, I'll be so stuck up with these no one can live with me." She put them on and began to read the book, whispering to herself, as was her way. "Well, these do magnify to beat the world. I believe I've been hurting my eyes with the old ones. But I won't read now. Thank you both lots and lots; for I get weary here, with nothing much to do; and just waitin', so to speak, just looking out of this window at the buds come in the spring, and the leaves drop in the fall; and just waitin'. For I haven't a thing to do or to live for. I haven't a neighbor left; and most of the grandchildren of my neighbors are dead or gone. And here I am."

We had the mid-day meal with her in her room. And while she took her afternoon nap, Alicia and I strolled up the lane, past the old Mifflin homestead, which always reminded me of the song "Jamie's on the Stormy Sea." Why? This house which fronted the west, and was three thousand miles from the sea in that direction, and was a thousand in the other, instantly brought into my mind the strains of that old song. We walked along hand in hand, like children, talking and laughing. "Turn around, Alicia. Look! there's the Mason County Hills. Do they mean anything to you?" "No, boy, not a thing, they're not even picturesque." "To me they're beautiful, and they have always filled my life with mysterious dreams and imaginings. Wherever I am, in New York, no matter where, I can close my eyes and see those hills, and see all the meadows and fields between and all the farmhouses, barns, and windmills. And I can see the white front and green blinds of the Mifflin house and bring back 'Jamie's on the Stormy Sea.'" "What a queer boy you are, Skeet; but, oh, I do love you."

We went back to the house, and I took Alicia around the yard. In prowling among old things in the carpenter shop I found the beer sign which I had painted and set in the gable of the cellar shed; and I told Alicia the story as I tell it in "MITCH MILLER."

By this time grandma was refreshed and ready to talk. "Sit down, you young lovers, and let me give you a lecture," grandma said. "Don't ever lie to each other. It is not necessary to have many secrets from each other; but those you have don't lie about. If one of you asks the other questions you don't want to answer, just say, 'None of your business.' Don't lie. Live within your income; have plenty to eat and to wear, but don't overspend. It leads to trouble. And I don't need to tell you, Alicia, that money spent for a bit of ribbon or a hair net is well spent. Men like to see their wives neat and pretty — and Skeet does, if I know anything about him. Be together a lot. If you're mates, you'll not tire each other. A man and wife working side by side will not get bored; it's the idle ones who get restless and tired. Alicia is right in wanting to go ahead teaching dramatics, at least until she has some babies; for you folks in the city do a kind of housekeeping that's easy; no cows, no wood to bring in. Don't go off from each other; there's no sense in it and it leads to estrangement. If you want to be away from each other, something's wrong. Have your babies now. By the time you're in middle life they'll be well on the way to care for themselves. Be of good cheer all the time. Evil is merely not having your way. It's our wills or desires interfered with by others or by circumstances that make what we call evil. And in that way of looking at it evil, so called, may not be bad in the end. It may often be good for us. Stand your troubles. When my husband and I came to this spot, it was in the wilderness; we endured cold in the winter and heat in the summer. Our fireplaces didn't heat the house; and we had no ice or luxuries in the summer. We had to win these things by work. Well, work, — that's the word. You see it in nature — everything has to work to live; and that's what it comes to. We live to work, and work to live; and the joy of life is in treading the circle and doing it well. And now listen: Don't go into these new-fangled ways of having separate beds; sleep together. I'm going to put you in a big bed upstairs to-night. Sleep to-

gether. It's nature's way. It's a foundation in harmony of temperament. And keep the baby by your side."

I was following grandma and was looking at Alicia to see how she took this lecture. I knew, for example, that Alicia shrank from the double couch. She looked down when grandma was saying this. Then grandma wound up her music box again and it played, "The Missus Gave a Sly Wink at Me."

We had supper at last. By eight o'clock grandma was asleep, true to a habit of seventy years or more. Alicia and I took another walk, and then returned to our room. I looked about at the old familiar pictures on the wall. There was the wood stove as it had stood as long as I could remember. I had slept here as a boy, falling into dreams to the voice of Aunt Melissa's practicing "The Raven." For she studied elocution among other things. Near the window was the chimney, and a ledge of brick where I had seen, as a little boy, the terrifying eyes of a great owl, drawing the quilt over my eyes to shut out the ominous horror. I pointed this out to Alicia. And here, mixing these memories of boyhood with the luxurious sensations of my newly won happiness, I fell asleep, with Alicia's arms around me.

CHAPTER L

WE were intending to leave the second day for Chicago. But unexpectedly my father came. How did it happen that he had not come before to see this lioness mother of his, stricken by old age and lying helpless in her bed? But such was the case. He was glad and surprised to see me; astonished at my marriage. He had been a guest at Mr. Fisk's house on the basis of my engagement to Martha. Now he found me married to a woman he had never heard of. When opportunity offered he asked me what was the matter. What had disrupted the engagement? I did not tell him the exact truth; or rather I stressed the things that I felt would make him less displeased with me. "You could see," I said, "what kind of people the Fisks are; not my kind or your kind." "Yes," he answered. "Old Fisk belongs to the dusty variety of human beings. But you got into it; and Martha was a nice girl; and I'll swear I would like to see you well placed in life. My own career has been such a catch-as-catch-can. Who's the girl you married?" I told him. He just looked at me, silent and with unfathomable eyes. True to my instinct I bored ahead and asked him, "What do you think of Alicia?" "She's smart," he said, laconically. And I could get no other comment from him. I took his attitude to mean: "Well, you've married her. I hope for the best. But I don't think much of your choice." I felt that he divined Alicia in particulars that I was blind to; that he saw in her potential disasters for me, disloyalties, willful free-faring, that would keep me constantly disturbed. But he was genial in Alicia's presence,

very courtly toward her. And Alicia was charmed with him. And she said: "You haven't your father's wonderful presence and appearance — his unusual physique and good looks. Perhaps you have a finer brain. Have you?" "I don't know; I doubt it."

We went our way at last, on the third day. Grandma made up a box of things for us, a quilt that she had sewed and initialed for me. She gave Alicia a silk shawl, one of her treasures, and a jet pin. Alicia was daughterlike and tender toward her, kissing her good-by affectionately and promising to take good care of me. We passed from the room after the good-by. I peered back to get a last look at her. She had turned her head, was gazing out of the window, not reflectively, but as if facing with a welcome all ultimate things. Her scarred and wrinkled hands were lying before her, the gold spectacles by the side of Andrew Jackson already commenced. I never saw her again!

Alicia and I parted at the train as house guests might who have shared happy hours and now go their several ways. She was anxious to get to the apartment to give a lesson. I had to go to the office. We had planned to meet at dinner. And the next day I was to move, in part at least, from the apartment which George and I were still sharing. There was that to manage; for I could not leave George with the apartment on his hands. I had to get him some one to share the expense; he had to do it, or I had to pay my half of the rent the same as before. But I had to see George and tell of my marriage, and make some fitting end of our long association as dwellers together.

I was at the apartment at about five, gathering my belongings into a trunk and satchel. George came in. "Well, old top," he said, "I suppose you're clearing out?" "Yes." "Why didn't you give a fellow an invite to your wedding?" "It was all so sudden; and then we went away right after the ceremony, that day; I meant to write you." "Well, I saw the item in the newspapers. Who's the girl, Skeet?" "You've met her; she was the girl who played the piano

that night for John Armstrong." "You don't mean it!" George looked at me with eyes whose glances might split rocks or crack doors. It was the look of the hunter, who sees game and watches its movement, already known from previous observation. He extended a swift, vigorous hand to me, clasped mine and said: "Here's the same old clasp, and a world of good wishes. Say! Why don't you take my cabin on the Rock River for a honeymoon?" "That's good of you — but I'm really busy as the devil with my land case; and Alicia — well, I don't believe she's much for roughing it."

I grieved to part with George, from the intimacy in which we had lived, first with Roger, now by ourselves. He was my first friend of quality in Chicago; and we had never had a word which shadowed the good-will and the happy serenity of our relationship. He had helped me in a thousand ways; he had initiated me into many delights. I owed my spiritual advance in so many directions to his influence. And now we were parting! I had been his friend, as far as my opportunity went, even giving him the hint to buy stock in the reorganized company in which I made \$80,000. He did so and profited famously, too. In an impulse I said to George: "Say, we don't need to part, after all. Come and live with us. I've got to telephone Alicia where I am, and I'll ask her. It will be all right, I'm sure." "Oh, no, Skeet, that won't do — you're damn good — but a man and his wife should have no old chum around." "Well, then, of course I'll pay my share of the rent until you get some one here that you want." "My mother will be here in a few weeks, and I was intending to have her here anyway. Now she'll fit in happily; and she'll love the apartment."

I stepped to the telephone to advise Alicia of my whereabouts, and to ask her if I might bring George to dinner with us. As I was speaking, George was motioning at me in protest and refusal. However, these words came back from Alicia: "Why do you try to make it clear to the north side? You have all that packing to do. Ethel Landon is here,

begging me to go to dinner with her and Wallace Reed. Why don't you stay with George if you wish? Or if you wish, bring him along; then we'll have a merry party." I turned to George and told him what Alicia had said. George shook his head: "Can't very well." "Suppose you stay here with me?" I went on with Alicia, "George can't come, Alicia." "Very well, you make it easy for yourself by staying with George." "All right, I'll be home by about ten."

At dinner George asked me what I wanted for a wedding present. "Nothing," I said. "Oh, well, the women are keen about these things. I'll see what I can get for your bride." And then we talked of our happy days together. "I have my misgivings about your marrying anybody, Skeet. But it's well enough to try it. I can't think of you as married. There's a part of you, recesses and uplands, that no woman can ever penetrate or climb to. I always feel with you that you never wholly surrender yourself to anybody; that I, even as intimately and as long as I have known you, do not know you." "Yes, it's true; there's a part of me that has always stood detached and alone. Still, I believe Winifred knew this part of me. And Alicia divines everything. Winifred sympathized with this *alter ego*; I don't know how far Alicia will." Then George brought up the subject of Martha Fisk. "How did that end so quickly?" I told him, and he said: "Oh, well! You know that venture of one of your selves amused me — it was a scream. And, of course, old Fisk saw all the time that it was unfitting. It was mating an eagle to a wren. And if you'd married Martha, you'd either have settled into that church-and-state atmosphere or else you'd have fared free and wasted yourself. It's possible that Alicia will bring you back to study, to writing again. That's your real self, your best self. And I want to see you take them up again. You've had enough of Auerbach's cellar, of Madame Lefevre and Julie Valentine, and all that sort of thing. In the language of Bob Hayden, your pencil is sharp enough now

— any more sharpening may break the point; any more fertilization might force your blossom to a great blooming and a quick withering. As things stand now, you're the luckiest entrant in this city life that I know. You're rich, you're a club man; you know people. You're a good lawyer — and you're married, and I hope with all my heart happily married; and for good and all."

George promised to dine with us soon. And with assurances on both sides that we would see almost as much of each other as formerly, we parted for the night. I was at the apartment, with as many satchels as I could carry, at ten o'clock. Alicia had not come. I read until eleven and then retired. It was nearly midnight when Alicia came in with Ethel Landon. I was half asleep, but they routed me out. And I got up and joined them in a drink and a smoke.

I arose the next morning clear in mind about a definite course in life.

CHAPTER LI

FOR one thing I was done with Auerbach's cellar. For another, I meant to take up Greek again. I hired a tutor and read Homer. Alicia wanted to study French. So I joined her under an instructor who came twice a week. Also I went back to my studies. I read Kant again and Schopenhauer; I read most of the classics again. And Alicia and I heard all the concerts and the operas. We had happy, busy hours together. I found that I was tremendously proud of Alicia. "You can have anything you wish, Alicia — just go to the stores and get what you want." Alicia was not extravagant, wasteful. Her excellent taste, sense of harmony and color, led her to beautiful things along paths of economy. But she bought handsome sables and hats; she knew where to get things. She had her shoes made to order. And all the trifles, lingerie, gloves, which go to a woman's toilet she had in abundance and in exquisite taste. Alicia knew that I was making a fair income by the law; she also knew, at last, of my fortunate speculation; and while she never suggested a more elaborate way of living, I finally said: "Alicia, let's move to a larger apartment." She was agreeable to this, and we found one of ten rooms, overlooking the lake. I furnished it with Oriental rugs, silver, mahogany, Circassian walnut. George Higgins had sent us some beautiful etchings for a wedding present. We kept a cook and a maid; and life went on in order and beauty. After a time Myrtle's present came. It was a set of coral beads, very delicate in color. I could see that Myrtle, though not approving of Alicia before I married her, had a family pride about accepting her, at least in the formalities, now that Alicia was my wife.

In the midst of all these happy things I thought I sensed a restlessness growing up in Alicia's manner. I thought it wise to give her freedom, to let her go and come as she would, even though I disapproved it. Accordingly, Alicia continued to entertain her men friends, precisely as she did before we were married. She went to the theater with them; she dined out with them. Often I came in after a prolonged day, and found Alicia with Wallace Reed, or some other man, talking, over a cigarette. There was never any specific thing that I could object to, — Alicia never departed from a certain standard of taste, — unless one should say that this whole course of freedom was unfitting. For my part my life was beyond reproach. I had no women friends. And if I had had, I could not have entertained them at our apartment; the apartment was Alicia's. If I went to see them, and was received in the same manner that Alicia entertained these men, would I not be open to suspicion? For I could see what Alicia was doing. At least the probabilities were that I did. But Alicia could not know what I did, if I was out of her sight in such attentions to other women. I had no such disposition; but that was the logic of things if I had made or continued women relationships.

I could divine in advance of the concrete experience arising, that Alicia could put me in the worse fault in case I should attempt to remonstrate with her about any of her ways. Little things had come to pass which I had mildly objected to; Alicia turned the argument on me so quickly that I had to apologize or defend myself; or else bring up the heavy artillery of my legal powers against her subtle fusillade. And as a kind of restlessness possessed her at times; and as moods of various lights and shades passed over her; and as she wounded me with her sharp depreciation at other times, the whole of it was accumulating to a point where I meant soon to face her and say, This is enough. Just now the whole advantage turned to her through the circumstance of Winifred's picture in its silver case falling from my pocket while I was changing my coat. It pitched

at her feet and flew open. Alicia looked at me with her large black eyes, but she did not try to get the picture; she did not even look where it was lying. What was to be done? I could not take it up and thrust it back in my pocket without a word. Alicia might think it was the picture of some woman now in my life. On the other hand, how was I to explain my carrying the picture of a woman so long dead? Why was I carrying it? And here I stood before Alicia, innocent of any wrong, yet embarrassed and beginning to color up. I stooped for the picture; and now I realized that I had never mentioned Winifred's name to Alicia. Therefore I had a long story to tell. Long stories in such cases are unmanageable, unconvincing. Awkwardly I said: "This is the picture of a girl I knew in Marshalltown" — and I handed the case to Alicia. Alicia, with a gesture graceful and disinterested, put the case on the table. "She's been dead a long while." That didn't sound right. Why would I be carrying the picture of a woman long dead? "She's the niece of Mrs. Huntley Moore. We must go to call on her — or — or have her to call on us."

"Mrs. Huntley Moore!" said Alicia, with a rising inflection of subtle disdain. "Is she your friend?" "Yes — a very good friend." "I'll leave you to do the honors for both of us." "Why?" "I am not interested in such people." "What do you mean?" "Widows of wholesale tobacconists who climb, hunt celebrities, and settle in England to be near the tombs of the great, whom they do not understand." "You know about Mrs. Moore?" "All about her." "Well, in regard to Winifred ——" "Don't — don't tell me. I don't wish to know. I never wish to pry into your private life, past or present. I rejoice in any happiness you have had. I don't envy it." Quietly Alicia went her way in and out of the room, leaving Winifred's picture where she had put it. At last I took it up and placed it back in my pocket.

And what was Alicia's animus toward Mrs. Moore? Her characterization was a distortion. Mrs. Moore was the

widow of a rich tobacconist; but that fact did not detract from her achievements in life, the culture she had attained, the richness of her associations, her personality, natural and developed. What was the occasion of Alicia's malice? Had Mrs. Moore snubbed her? Or did she, after all, envy me a friendship of this distinction and advantage, seeing, too, that Alicia herself had no friends beyond Ethel Landon, Wallace Reed, and people of that quality.

It was not long after this that Alicia made ready to go to New York with Ethel Landon. "We're going down for about ten days, Skeet," Alicia said. "I want to do a little shopping; and I want to tell you, I'd like to have my engagement ring reset. Do you mind?" "No," I said. By which I meant that I would not stand in her way. Yet why did she not like the ring as I had given it to her? — even if it was in the setting that I had given it to Martha Fisk. It was the ring meant for Alicia — so far as Alicia knew. "I have been to Strand's where you bought the ring, and they say I can have the stone mounted after the design I have in mind for \$150.00 — do you mind?" "Not at all." Yet I did mind. For Alicia hurt me by this request. What I had done in giving her Martha's ring did not hurt her. Alicia did not know it.

I began to wonder if jewelers kept a record of the jewels which they sold, the weight, price, date of sale. And if they did, would Alicia seek to find out what I had paid for the ring, or its weight? Surely not the date of purchase! For what could really lead her to that inquiry? I dropped in at Strand's and asked one of the clerks, whom I knew, about these transactions. I found that a record was kept of the price, the weight of the jewel, and the date of sale. I could only wonder what Alicia was driving at, if anything.

And Alicia went to New York. She was only going for ten days. And during this time she wrote me nearly every day. Her stay was prolonged to two weeks, to three weeks, with less frequent letters. She was gone a month, and for the last week of her absence she did not write me at all. I

kept up a daily letter until the last week, then I ceased writing, too. Finally, she telegraphed me from Cleveland en route. Should I go to meet her at the station? I was half persuaded not to do so. But the delight of having Alicia back, the sensuous thrill of seeing her, taking her in my arms, overcame every other purpose. And I stood by the car as she alighted. She looked brighter, more radiant, lovelier than ever. She seemed overjoyed to see me. And we drove to the apartment in a kind of silent bliss, in the ardor that reunites lives. We dined together, and then all doubts of Alicia dissolved in the rapture of an evening of mutual surrender, wholly confiding and complete. She told me of all she had seen and done. "And what have you done, Skeet?" "Just work and wait for you." She held me closer to her with a quick embrace. "Why did you not write me?" "Well, because the tone of one of your letters was not right. But I've forgiven you. Let's forget it." Alicia had again turned my knife against me. "Where's your engagement ring?" "Oh, I must go for that. It wasn't done in time for me to take." Perhaps Alicia didn't want to wear the evidence of an engagement — perhaps. And as to the evidence of her marriage, she had refused a wedding ring — and so — well, I was baffled.

CHAPTER LII

At last Alicia had her engagement ring reset the way she wished it. She showed it to me, manifesting the greatest happiness. If she knew anything of the history of the ring, she did not betray it. Would she not? She had the courage to say anything. She was not in the least afraid of me. On the other hand, might she not be nourishing some plan which would be spoiled by a present revealment of her knowledge that I had bought this ring months before I had given it to her — and why so long before? I did not dare to edge toward the subject. For while there was a sort of lie implied in the ring itself, I thought of my grandmother's injunction: "Don't lie to each other," whenever the possibility of Alicia's confronting me about the ring arose in my mind. Time wore on and nothing came up about the ring; and to make amends, to clear the case as much as possible in Alicia's favor, I gave her a beautiful emerald, also a dinner ring. These were gifts in her own right. Was I not now absolved from my sin?

But a year passed and Alicia had no child and no prospect of any. A vital passion for life, for its creation, stirred deeply in me, to see our spirits and our bodies merged into fresh life, another being. "What is the matter, Alicia? Don't you want a child?" "Horrors, no, Skeet! — If I had a child, you'd see everything changed between us. It would divide our love, take my time from you. Don't be silly. Leave our happiness alone."

So it was Alicia's will that I had this disappointment! I felt bitterly about this at times; but Alicia was so desirable as a lover, a courtesan-wife, that I accepted the situation in

the philosophy that our wishes in full cannot be attained. One day I received a letter postmarked Cleveland. I seemed to sense that the envelope contained a message out of the ordinary before I opened it. I slit it with my paper knife, and the following communication in type-writing danced before my astonished eyes :

“Dear Sir : This to advise you that your wife, a long time before she married you, went to a surgeon here. And as you will never have an heir this is to tell you why.

“A friend.”

I read this over and over again, a sickness of heart carrying me farther down into disgust. If this letter were a lie, who could know me, or know Alicia, or be familiar to our lives to the extent of daring to breathe this poison upon me from ambush? And if this letter were true, had I not been cheated? Could I get rid of Alicia soon enough? The problem was to find out the truth. How could I? Could I wait for other letters, and eventually trap the writer? But suppose no other letters were written? Could I get the truth from Alicia? No! I had no skill, and no persistence in questioning, great as I thought them, adequate for this task. For Alicia was elusive as air. She had the courage to beat back an inquisition, and the agility to evade it; and she had the power and the skill to turn my own knife against me. Yet as I had a redoubtable proficiency in cross-examination I decided to use it upon her. I remembered from my reading the use to which Socrates put the elenchus, the sagacity of circling far around a victim, closing in gradually and by concealed movements. All this against my wife! There was infamy in it. Yet I seemed justified to myself.

I had been hard at work in the office with the land case, which promised now to end in victory, and in a large fee. I had other business, too. And Alicia, so far as she intruded herself upon my own affairs, insisted upon my going on with the law. Alas! how my clay was moulded by every hand

that I came in intimacy with. The wife I had chosen, not interested in my dreams, but like my father and my mother, like every one upon the way, guiding and moving me in a profession, that I heartily disliked. It was a time now when I was tired from long application; and for the purpose of trapping Alicia I decided to propose a vacation for both of us, a trip, with the hope that she would say something which would give me a clue. One evening I said: "Alicia, let's take a trip together — what do you say?" "That's lovely, Skeet — can you get away?" "Yes, for a few days. Where shall we go?" "Oh, I don't know. New York is always fun. But we could have a wonderful time in Cleveland. I have friends there who would entertain us royally."

Cleveland! Alicia had telegraphed me from there on her way home from New York. But was that of significance? But the anonymous letter had come from Cleveland! One of the chances was that it had been mailed there by some one who lived there and who knew Alicia, or about her. "All right," I said, "Cleveland it is. Who are the people?" "Mr. and Mrs. Hays. She was Grace Farwell, whom I knew as a girl in my home town. He's a fine chap, prosperous and generous. You'll like him. And we'll have a gay time. Can we be off in a day or two?" "Yes, you'd better telegraph, hadn't you? And in the meantime I can attend to a thing or two." "All right; let's try to leave day after to-morrow." We arranged it that way; but I sent for Tom Murray, a detective friend.

The degradation of this step almost overwhelmed me. When Tom Murray entered my office, I was half persuaded to make up a business, a message for him. Yet I was deeply aroused over this possibility in Alicia's life; and if she had done this unspeakable thing, I meant to be rid of her. After a pause I said to Murray: "Tom, I have a very delicate mission for you — it's about my wife. I have just the smallest start for you to work on. The case does not involve her in any way except this: I want to know whom she knows in Cleveland, particularly if she knows any surgeon

there, or knows him well. I have some evidence that a number of years ago she was improperly operated upon, understand, not in any operation that was out of the way — but just improperly. And if so, I want the name of the doctor, and if I can get it, the particular malpractice that was performed.”

Tom looked at me incredulously. “Well, why not get the facts from her?” “I can’t, she’s averse to going into the matter.” “Well, it’s none of my business, that part of it — what do you want me to do?” “I want you to follow her to Cleveland — I was going along; that is, I said so. But I’m not, because if she’s alone she’ll feel freer and act freer. You report to me daily, and when you come back, send in your bill.”

When the day came to go, for Alicia got a cordial invitation by return wire from Mrs. Hays, I pleaded an engagement in court, promising to come later if I could. And Alicia went away, happy and unsuspecting. Well, I was ashamed of myself; I felt myself soiled; but before me was the prospect of a free space, where I would be rid of every circumstance leading to, or requiring a lie or a deception. I longed for that emancipation with unspeakable longing. For in so many ways my life was distasteful. I felt called onward out of the lowlands. What was my life? Not ordered by my will, but fashioned by circumstance, every step linked to a step behind. Billy Phelan, my own depression, and Roger had led me to Auerbach’s cellar; and from there I had come to Alicia, to Martha; and from one to the other, until my marriage. Should I never come into possession of my real self, my veritable fate, out of so much that was the expression of my varied and lesser self, and the reaction of external things upon me, as I had affected them to react upon me?

The first report from Tom was to the effect that Alicia was met at the train by a man with a limousine and driven to the Hays’ home; that the man may have been Mr. Hays. The next report cleared the doubt: Tom had seen Mr. Hays.

Alicia's escort was some one else. The third report recounted a dinner party consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Hays, Alicia and this man, who was probably Dr. Howard Caldwell. Finally this was verified: it was Dr. Caldwell, a surgeon of Cleveland. The case was clearing — but not proved. The facts fitted together marvelously thus far. Alicia telegraphed me, asking if I was coming on. I wired that it was impossible. She then wrote me that she would stay a week longer. But before the week was half gone, she returned without announcing it.

I found her at the apartment one evening when I came home to dinner. "Well, well," I said, taking Alicia in my arms. "How do you happen to be here?" "To see you," said Alicia, kissing me. "You flatterer!" "Of course — and besides — well, I love Grace, but at times she's just exasperating, just like she was as a girl. We used to quarrel frightfully — in spite of the fact that we were so fond of each other. I believe Grace is envious of me — she's just a little neurotic anyway; and it angered her that I had so many pretty things — this emerald annoyed her in particular. I could see it. And so I just fled. I never will stay around any one who has envy. It just kills me!" "Did you quarrel?" "Just a few words." "Did you have a happy time?" "Quite so, except for this. I saw some old friends and we all dined around together and were quite gay." "Did you have any beaux, Alicia?" "I never have beaux, Skeet — you're my only beau. I have men friends; that you know." "Well, if Grace is envious of you, if she's resentful, she'd talk about you if she had a chance." "Of course she would; but she'll never have the chance. Whatever I do I'm willing any one should see and know about." "That's fine; that's like your courage." I was about to ask the names of Alicia's men friends in Cleveland; and whether Grace was a gossip of known tendencies; but I forbore. I did not wish to close in upon Alicia too suddenly.

The next morning Tom Murray came to see me. He had

nothing to report but that Alicia had been driven to the train by Dr. Caldwell. "Is there anything more?" he asked. I said "no" and paid his bill.

In a few days I received an anonymous postal card mailed at Toledo. It simply said: "If you have any surgical work to do, don't fail to consult Dr. Howard Caldwell." A sure conviction went through me that I had the facts now; that I could confront Alicia at any time. I had been the runner all along; hands had slipped from me as I speeded ahead, or I had torn them away as they clutched at me. I had passed from the group at Petersburg; from Suevie Ross, "Grinner" Newton at Marshalltown. I had lost Winifred. I had gone from the boarding house of Uncle Harvey, leaving behind Madame Lefevre, Billy Phelan, Lillian McFee; Roger had gone his way. I had risen from the usury house of J. Steele & Co. to an association with Patrick Dorsey, and from him to an office of my own. I had won and lost Martha Fisk; I had passed from the club life, from the knowledge of its millionaire loungers. All the while I seemed to be stripping from myself all outer layers of unreality, of dead or dying scale. I was growing more lonely and more alone. Yet if this were true of Alicia, if she had come to me as a counterfeit woman, I meant to be free of her, no matter what it would cost me in the way of physical or æsthetic denial.

And in regard to this the absurdity of the laws of marriage and divorce came to me in many new lights. What did the law regard as the *raison d'être* of marriage? Was it a home? A wife or a husband can make the home a hell without furnishing other ground of action than that of a legal separation. Was it conjugal relationship? This can be refused, and so long as one does not absent himself or herself from the domestic roof, no divorce will be allowed. Is it children? No! The law only takes cognizance of physical inability to perform the marital act. And yet with a characteristic hypocrisy the law on marriage and divorce is penetrated with all these postulates; that children, fertility, conjugal rights are the

raison d'être of marriage, or their failure a ground of complaint at least; and yet it recognizes none of their miscarriages as a cause of divorce. Such being the case, I had to hold Alicia to her word that either could be free at will, and make up a case for a dissolution of our marriage. But months went by before the matter came to an issue.

CHAPTER LIII

ASTRAY and in the midst of these woods of perplexity, this chaos of my spiritual activities, but in the darkness that fell around me, my vision introverted itself. I began to see myself in postures and characters hitherto unknown to me. I saw myself as pitiful, even to a certain weakness; and therefore inclined to lose conviction as to things before proven clearly, all settled in my mind as demonstrated. I found a great indifference taking possession of me at times; what did it matter what Alicia was, or what she had done? Passion for Alicia, an intellectual Pyrrhonism, becoming an emotional instability, caused me to warm to Alicia, to cool toward her, according to the movements of inscrutable currents in my being. In my moods of pity or of passion the proof I had of Alicia's fraud upon me melted away like mists that assume horrific shapes and then vanish with the rising sun. And when distrust and hatred entered my heart all that I had learned and pieced together formed an iron mesh in which her guilty spirit was caught and held. Did I have two natures? Did the two halves of my brain function in opposing directions? In response to my veering spirits Alicia's words moved and danced before me like fantoccini. If I was tender, trustful, and loving, she was inclined to be so. If I was distant, reticent, self-absorbed, she kept out of my way; or faced me in silence, her large black eyes enveloping me with their secret searching. I felt that my personality was lost; that there was no Skeeters Kirby; that, like the lepidoptera, I was changing, had changed; without memory of what I had been, and without vision of what I should be. If I could only love Alicia

wholly! If I could only give myself to her completely and find the gift sacredly received and prospering for both of us! I could not do it. And yet I loved Alicia — whenever I could calmly and with concentration examine myself I seemed sure of that. If not why did I not leave her? In answer to this, dancing devils would jeer at my slavery to her passional hold upon me; that is it! And then I would vow to be free of this, to rise out of the clods of myself into a purer and more harmonious form.

To gather myself together, and to do this to envision myself first I found that contacts with people who had known me well in times past gave me assistance. I sought out old friends, those who had seen me at different stages of my life. I made it a point to pause and talk with those I chanced to run across. One day I met Julie Valentine on the street. She and Thad Hilburn were now married, and living in one of the suburbs. In a few minutes' talk with her I got a transient glimpse of myself as I was in the gay days at the apartment with George and Roger; that rollicking, vital self of me that now seemed no more. And Suevie Ross called on me at the office one day. What had become of the thirster for Greek lore, the youth that walked and dreamed about the hills of Big Creek? And my father came to see me. He was making a brief stay, pleaded business engagements as the reason for staying at the hotel. I got nothing from him, except the word that I was not looking well. Also I saw George whenever I could. He would say: "What is the matter, old top? You look like your pep is oozing." In these talks of other days I rediscovered what different people had done for me, what I was to them under their stimulus. But I saw clearly that I had no power to hold to myself; that I was in a flow, in a whirl of spiritual atoms, changing under the shifting environment. Was I realizing what I had observed in other men? — the slow poison of a powerful feminine nature, the tangle and the subjection of a mysterious and unmoral wife, with all the enervation and loss of personality that such a thing entails. And there

would be Alicia! so slender of waist, and with her delicate hips; and if she chanced to be smiling and sweet of voice, as was frequently the case, all my fears vanished. Where was the poison, the web and the tangle? They did not exist; they were only the products of my disordered fancy. In this state of feeling I felt my heart flood with penitence toward Alicia, both for my secret hostility and for everything I had done under its influence. Who was the offender, after all? Had I not deceived Alicia as to Martha? Had I not soiled her personality by the gift of an engagement ring transferred from a prior hand? It was only when I hardened myself, when the counter currents of my being set in, that I could keep together the proof of Alicia's duplicity, and thus fix my will to go on to freedom.

I found to the full how futile it is to lay one's involved troubles before the best of friends. I went to George with the whole story. I told him that I had had Alicia followed, that I had discovered Dr. Caldwell — I told him everything in detail. George did not give me what I wished for; a definite conclusion, the word: "Your case is clear." He only said: "It looks funny." And if one has an aching tooth the most friendly dentist may listen patiently to an intricate description of the pain and its beginning, yet have nothing to say except: "It had better be pulled." That was George's comment in effect. "Be divorced." Having given him my confidence he felt free to say: "You should never have married her. She's not for you. Any one can see that." Any one! Why not I? The Fates had me! The Furies seemed to be hovering near to take me too!

I asked George to dinner. I wanted him to see Alicia, to study her. He came. Alicia was in one of her moods, wary and aloof, though not lacking in charm, by no means in hospitality. All through the dinner and later, I kept thinking of "Lamia," of Alicia as a snake woman who would assume her reptilian form under the philosophic glare of George's Apollonian eyes. She snapped him up a time or two on little errors in speech, staying his discomfiture with

a genial laugh or the words, "I make that mistake myself." George was talking of literary things at last. Alicia listened, seemed to wait. She dove at him when he ascribed a book to the wrong author, and set him right as to that. For the rest she kept out of his reach. Her way was to attack, to wound first, and then to fly out of reach. George was unable to lift the battle ground to her level and there with weapons of her own choosing vanquish her and make her yield the mastery to him. So far as helping me was concerned, George's visit came to nothing. Shame was the after-effect for me. I, the husband of Alicia, bringing the closest man friend to our board to spy upon Alicia, to worst her, if he could! But also an anger entered me that Alicia had so signally held her own.

I went to see Mrs. Huntley Moore. She had heard of my marriage, was wondering why no opportunity had been given her to call on Alicia. "We have been in and out of town," I said. "We have moved." "Let me know your address," she requested. "I am going away soon; but I'll come to see your wife before leaving."

I gave Mrs. Moore the number. I thought: "Let Alicia treat her as she will; it is not I, nor am I responsible for Alicia." Mrs. Moore would understand that. And perhaps, after all, Alicia would be gracious, would really feel honored by the call. "You have changed," said Mrs. Moore, looking at me. "You look maturer." "Is it that?" I asked. "I feel fatigued, Mrs. Moore. I am working very hard." "I hope to have you and your wife visit me when I get to England. You have never been; and it will open up a new life to you. You have earned the experience by all your study and striving. And don't work yourself to death. My husband did. That is a tragedy, to work too much, live too little. I'm sure Mrs. Kirby wishes to see you enjoy the fruit of your labors."

My call on Mrs. Moore ended in vaguest results. She found me changed, but she did not help me to a vision of myself. There was scarcely the need on her part; for in

her presence I saw myself as I was in the old days with Winifred. That self of me would never have married Alicia Adams! And where was my fault that any self of me had done so?

I do not know how Alicia treated Mrs. Moore when she called. I only know her attitude toward me the evening that followed. "Your friend, Mrs. Moore, was here this afternoon," said Alicia with mild asperity. "Why did she come? I am not interested in her. She really bores me. Were you responsible for it?" "Yes." "You have seen her, then?" "Yes, I met her recently." "Met her! Well, if you called on her without taking me, that was all you could do, since I should not have gone with you — but the fact remains that you were willing in that case to go without me. There is a kind of disloyalty in you, Skeet — an unfaithfulness that I have sensed all along."

And these words made me see, as I had not seen before, that Alicia did not like any of my friends; her tendency was to drive them away from me; to surround me on the other hand with her friends.

And thus the months wore on. I had no grounds for a divorce. I oscillated between wishing one, and not wishing one. In the meantime I had no fresh proof of Alicia's fraud upon me. I had worn threadbare what proofs I had with constant reflection upon them. They lost vitality in the handling. Alicia charmed me, wounded me, held me with passion, drove me into armed preparation, by her independence, her dominant will, her self-sufficiency, her coldness of spirit when she was displeased or crossed. I could never subdue her except in a pitched battle. Something must happen to precipitate that. And the time wore on. I was waiting, dawdling, half shut away from Alicia's life, suspicious of her, but without evidence; and in truth afraid of her, too. But afraid of nothing except that she would master me if I opened hostilities; afraid of being too deeply hurt by her — and dreading that, because I was not ready to part from her.

CHAPTER LIV

It is January. The cold is bitter. The snow, hard and glittering, is scratching my office window like diamond dust. My satchel, packed for a journey, is by my desk. My grandmother has died! And I am going to the funeral.

Alicia has refused to go with me. It is too cold. She is too cold. The death of this pioneer woman means nothing to her. My grief touches her but slightly. She has invited Ethel Landon to stay with her while I am gone. Nothing is said; but I divine that there will be dinners in my absence; that Alicia's men friends will flock to the apartment, that there will be wine and laughter. With these forebodings, I have come to the office. I wait for train time, becalmed in a study of life, myself, my future.

A caller is announced by my clerk. And in a moment "Grinner" Newton enters. His face has changed. It was the face of a provincial. Its awkward lines have now become lines of strength. His brow has broadened. His eyes express self-satisfaction, a certain egotism. He is dressed in a fur coat, a fur cap. He has the air of a dignitary. For in truth he is not "Grinner" Newton any more. He is Philip Newton, a doctor of philosophy and of laws. The church educated him to a post-graduate course that he earned at Johns Hopkins by statistical work. He has become a little brother of the rich. He is a familiar of notables. He is a dove and a serpent. He coos and coils. The ravens are feeding him; but also at 32 he is the president of a college. He has married a rich woman. They travel abroad; they are entertained by people of prominence. He has spent the last summer at the castle of a rich American sojourning in

Spain. Life has showered good things around him. His hair drips oil; honeycomb is under his tongue. Surely mercy and plenty are his. He is a careerist. And I — I am a half-made creature still struggling with clods; I am half educated in spite of myself; I am a poor success in a profession I despise. For just now I have lost my land case completely. More skillful lawyers and of greater influence than those previously pitted against me have been retained in the case. All its phases have been consolidated into one case in the Federal Court and I have been routed completely and irrevocably. The law hangs heavy on my hands this morning; and "Grinner's" whole manner patronizes me; it shames me. What would he say, if in addition to the things he sees about me, he knew of Alicia! Knew that Alicia was my mistress before I married her; knew that Skeeters Kirby, whom he had seen as the reliquary of Mitch Miller's Huckleberry Finn, and later as his fellow in the high school, and his associate at Champaign, had become Skeeters Kirby of the city and the club, of law and speculation, of wine and women; as the imitator of a Continental with a mistress, at last her husband lying upon a bed of spikes? He began to ask me what my activities were, whether I took part in civic affairs, in reforms. No, I never had, for I was a failure; but I was also something of an artist. Of this I was more and more persuaded these days. Then he began to say, "We are in the midst of great problems and struggles — the right of the people to deal with the coming accepted national questions, such as temperance and Sabbath observance. Lovers of our common religion, lovers of our great republic, lovers of common humanity, must make one common cause, must recognize the situation, and raise themselves up to the magnitude of the occasion, and carry all through to the righteousness beyond. And I wish you, as an old friend, to join in these great works."

I looked at "Grinner" with ill-concealed contempt. It was not that he did not have the right to entertain any opinion he chose. But I had the right to despise him for

entertaining them. Here, according to my understanding of life, he had become an oleaginous, if unconscious, fraud, a self-deceived idealist; and the world, America, was so organized, its culture was such that "Grinner" would always have a soft bed, a popular applause, crowds to hear him lecture, for he lectured too; and I had set my feet in a way where I could never succeed, except by reaching the heights; and if I did I should look down upon a world that feared me, and envied me and hoped for my fall. With "Grinner" before me I saw myself more clearly than through any old friend with whom I had brought myself in contact for the purpose of reënvioning myself. I saw that I was the free spirit, the antinomian, the bruised, entangled climber among the cliffs; the failure, perhaps, but the unconquered and the unrepentant.

And "Grinner" — he was a mind murderer. He did not believe in using the mind to think; but to use it to think in terms of the mob psychology. Temperance a national question! Sabbath observance a national question! Sabbath a Jewish holy day, not our Sunday, a day sanctified by different authorities and on different grounds. Sabbath observance — but according to what code? Surely the code of the mind murderers! And thus "Grinner" had joined his strength to the forces that hate beauty and freedom, and who are determined to commonize the republic to the level of a village outlook and a village practice in life. My mind was of the best to combat these principles. I was grieving for a grandmother who loved liberty and knew the richness of the gift of life. I was in rebellion against Alicia, who had seemingly degraded my blood and my spirit. "You are just talking, 'Grinner'; you are not thinking; you are just saying, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians.' You have joined in the popular hurrahs. And I have no part with you in this faith. I am miles removed from your interests. Truly I despise all that you seem to hold dear." "Grinner" looked at me imperturbably. He was quite fixed in his ideas; quite satisfied with their usufruct. I had not risen to the

necessary spiritual level to have the vision he had! That was his look. Then as he saw me reaching for my satchel, he arose and extended his hand. "Good luck, Arthur — and when you're my way, come to see me. I'll send you some books in a few days that I want you to see. There is a history of European politics since the 1815 of Napoleon that I want you to read. It throws convincing light on what I have endeavored to express."

And "Grinner" went his way. He was out of my life too. Yes, I had retained no friend of my boyhood life, either from Petersburg or Marshalltown. My mother and Myrtle lived abroad. My father was growing older and he was scarcely in my life. Davis I knew scarcely at all. Alicia was not my wife, no not that. And my grandmother was dead! I started through the cold to the station to take the train which should carry me to look for the last time into the face that was hers.

CHAPTER LV

THE wind hurled, the snow swirled around the square at Petersburg. The signs creaked in the blast. Hardy pedestrians leaned against the gale, their heavy coats flapping about them, red noses sticking from mufflers and caps. From the hotel I was directed to the drugstore; and there by the stove stood my Uncle Henry, with two or three of the pall bearers, men growing oldish, sons of the pioneers who were my grandmother's contemporaries.

My uncle told me of my grandmother's last day. The cold weather had dealt with her piteously. They had done their best to keep her room warm; but the wind cut through the crevices of the window; and in the night the fire in the stove died down. She grew more and more tired; at last almost impatient for the end. On the morning of her death she began saying: "Well, pa, you've come at last — oh, how glad I am! I can't understand why you have waited so long. Here I have been in this bed these years — just waiting and praying, and you wouldn't come. And now you're here — praise God; and if you'll just take my hand now and lead me, I'm so happy — and to see you again — oh, what happiness to see you again." Uncle Henry and Maggie, the girl, were standing in the room, and grandma was looking into space, talking with clear reality to — my uncle was sure grandfather's spirit was standing by the bed and that grandma saw him. She had talked in this way most of the morning, ceasing only in little dozes. At last her eyes grew very bright, she tried to reach out her hand, but it failed her and fell. And just at noon, as the old clock

was striking the hour, her life went forth in a sigh of profound relief and peace.

The condition of the roads was almost impassable, heavy with snow, rough with deep ruts. They had taken nearly three hours for the five miles. The body was in the chapel of the church, waiting the hour of two before it was brought into the auditorium for the services. "Can I see grandma, Uncle Henry?" "Why, yes, the church is open; somebody is there — go right up now if you wish." "I do — I don't want to see her when any one else is present."

I beat my way through the blast, the snow. When I got to the room, one or two townspeople were standing near the coffin. They nodded to me, and passed into the main auditorium; for the chapel was cold as the outdoors. The breath from my nostrils unrolled into the air like jets of steam — plumes of mist came from my mouth. And there lay my grandmother as beautiful as the effigy of a queen upon an Italian sarcophagus; her brow smooth and high, full and lovely, her hair roached back and only a little gray; her nose as delicate and shapely as a perfection in marble, her cheeks full, her lips pressed into an expression of wistfulness and beauty. My grandmother! This soul closer to me than all beings in life gone now; her spirit vanished from the meadows I loved, from my contemplation of the Mason County hills which were always interpreted in the light of her life, in the long story of her pilgrimage here, from that girlhood which stretched back beyond the ascendant star of Andrew Jackson, whom she admired so greatly. My grandmother! Who really knew so little of my wanderings in the city, who had seen Alicia, but had not fathomed her, had not realized what I had done, or foreseen that I should suffer from it. And standing here alone with the dead, as a requiem, as an expression of myself, I repeated, amid sobs, these words from the enduring poem of Willa Sibert Cather:

"Grandmither, think not I forget, when I come back to town,
An' wander the old ways again an' tread them up an' down.
I never smell the clover bloom, nor see the swallows pass,

Without I mind how good ye were unto a little lass,
I never hear the winter rain a-pelting all night through,
Without I think and mind me of how cold it falls on you.
And if I come not often to your bed beneath the thyme,
Mayhap 'tis that I'd change wi' ye, and gie my bed for thine,
Would like to sleep in thine.

"Grandmither, give me your clay-cold heart that has forgot to ache,
For mine be fire within my breast and yet it cannot break.
It beats an' throbs forever for the things that must not be,—
An' can ye not let me creep in an' rest awhile by ye?
A little lass afeared o' dark slept by ye years ago —
Ah, one has found what night can hold 'twixt sunset an' the dawn!
So when I plant the rose an' rue above your grave for ye,
Ye'll know it's under rose and rue that I would like to be,
That I would like to be."

My tears ceased to flow. My voice steadied itself — became clear and firm. Something fell from my eyes — outward and inward. I saw myself. I came to myself. I was I. My will returned to me; my vision. This dead face brought to life that strength and that resolution which were sapped, invalidated by the conditions of my life. Alicia! All feeling for her went out of me — stood external to me, alien and scarcely remembered. I saw in an instant what I could do, what I must do. I must be rid of Alicia; and I would be rid of her! How long had I stood here in thought? The pall bearers entered, and bore the coffin to the auditorium. I entered and waited for the service.

It had begun when my father entered. His train was late. He sat by me, self-controlled, but visibly moved. At the end of the service he passed in line to look at his mother's face. His mother! And I shall never forget his eyes — so large, so tragically comprehending, a look in them of prophecy for himself. Through the blast and the snow we went to the cemetery, and stood till the grave was filled; then back to town. My father and I talked briefly; and I started for my train. He was a tragic figure of loneliness standing at the door of the hotel, waving a slow farewell to me. And I went to Chicago feeling as lonely as he looked.

I could not rid my mind of the look of his eyes as he gazed upon the dead face of his mother. Had not all his life come to him in that moment? Why had he married my mother? Why had he been entangled in circumstances which his giant strength could not cut? Why was he alone — the lonely husband of a wife living in Italy; the father of a daughter who became a contessa, moving in a world wholly foreign to him and to her own youth? How are we poor creatures destroyed in alliances, in loves, in friendship! Married to human beings that have no more affinity for us than exists between the beasts of the field, which mate and separate and are strange to each other afterward. And even as the animal may mature and destroy its father or its mother, so do children grow into strength and turn upon or neglect, weaken or destroy, the beings that gave them birth. Of all these things I thought as the train made its way to Chicago. And I was intense and set of will. I would be rid of Alicia!

CHAPTER LVI

I GOT to Chicago in the morning. I did not telephone Alicia. I went to luncheon with George Higgins, and told him that my mind was made up fully and beyond changing: I should divorce Alicia. "That's the thing for you to do." "Why do you say that so emphatically?" "Because it's a rotten outrage for you to be tied to an egotistical—well——" "Well—what?" "Oh, I don't like to say. Look here, Skeet! I'm a hunter, I know the ways of game: I know the ways of women, too. A straight woman is a straight woman. Don't get mixed up with this stuff that a woman has the right to do anything a man does. She hasn't. The reason is she's physiologically different from a man. And in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred if a woman is free with you she'll be free with others too. Why not? What is there about you that makes you the only one? Love? Hell! Didn't she love some one before she did you? And if she did, can't she love some one after you, and at the same time she is loving you? Why, a man only needs to put his thought on it to see these things." "Yes, if he can think." "Precisely so." "Well, I can think now." "I'm glad to hear it. Really, you've acted at times to me as if you were dazed, hypnotized." "If I go through I can depend on you to help me, do the legal work and so forth?" "You surely can."

And though my mind was made up I wished a fitting time in which to speak it. Should it be now after luncheon? Or in the middle afternoon, or after dinner, or in the early morning? When? I wanted to feel that the psychological time was at hand. I meant to talk the matter out with

Alicia. I wanted her to have a fair opportunity, a vital moment for the best use of her powers. I wanted this for myself too.

The afternoon went by; the evening came. I went to the club and dined alone. I was not *persona non grata* here; but I was almost a stranger here. Since my separation from the Fisk patronage and my marriage, the old fellows who had warmed to me, smiled upon me, merely bowed to me here amid the mahogany and the purple of the great dining room. I sat at a little table quite by myself, feeling, as I had been feeling so much of late, that I was running, receding, leaving behind faces and scenes that I had glanced at in passing, and that had never really identified themselves with my life.

It was nine o'clock when I left the club. I stood at the entrance waiting for a taxi. Within two blocks of me was the house where Uncle Harvey and the three spiders kept boarders when I first came to the city. Its lower story had been fronted to the street with a store occupied now by a tobacco dealer. Around me were the boulevards that Madame Lefevre and I had walked together. But how changed! No victorias with docked horses now; all automobiles; and the smell of the gas filled the air. A few blocks farther south was the apartment building where George still lived. His mother was with him now, patiently at work upon her translation of the "Æneid." She had seen me first when I was in the glow of the classics. And now she was still living with the creation of Virgil; and I had gone through almost as much as Æneas — and had come to this change! The city seemed now like a leviathan, a dragon that has eaten its fill, and turns or moves half asleep, growling half audibly in dreams disturbed by heavy digestion. The taxi drew up and started for my apartment.

When I arrived I found lights burning in almost every room. But every one was gone. There was no maid to answer the door; the cook was out, too. In the drawing-room I found cocktail glasses on the table freshly glazed

with recent libations; cigarette stubs, cigar stubs filled the ash trays. Alicia must have left but recently. She must have had guests. I went into the dining room. There was no evidence here of festivities, unless a huge bunch of roses on the buffet bespoke a party. But in the kitchen there were empty wine bottles. I stood in the silence of the place. My grandmother came before me as she lay in the coffin! Did she not look like Guinevere, as Sir Thomas Malory described her? And now in a place of fields and woods under the snow, beneath oak trees shaking to the winds of January she was lying, unchanged as yet, looking as I had seen her in the chapel at Petersburg!

But had Alicia gone to Ethel Landon's, who lived not far away? Was she at the theater? And now my mind began to plot. My will was fixed; but something told me I might add to the proof I had; that I might sharpen my intent by discovering Alicia in more definite treason. I decided to hide for an auscultation and a watching. I knew that I was sinking into deeper infamy; but what was the cause of it, Alicia, or myself?

Alicia's sleeping room was just off the drawing-room, a double door between. I went in there. Here the lights were on. Some of her apparel was on the bed, as if she had hesitated as to what she would wear. I got a book, sat in the chair near her bed, and began to read and wait. I planned to crawl under her bed if I heard her at the door. I only had to rely upon the chance that she would be escorted home, and that her escort would enter; for a moment anyway. And if this happened I should have the chance to hear Alicia in conversation with him, speaking in the freedom assured by my absence. But there were my coat and hat. What should I do with them? Again how should I get from under the bed? Should I close the entrance door after I had finished my spying, as if entering? Should I go out softly and sleep at a hotel? I had to risk some things; all things could not be prevised. I went to my own room and locked my hat and coat in my closet. I came back and

began to read. If Alicia entered while I was going about baiting the trap, I would simply fail in my scheme, and would have to make the best face of things possible. But it was now nearly eleven o'clock and I was ready. I had nothing to do but to crawl under the bed when I should hear the click of her key in the entrance door, seventy-five feet down the hall. Then I began to wonder again how I should get out from under the bed. Suppose I had to stay there all night? Suppose Alicia should wake as I was crawling out and hear me, see me? Well, even so, my will was fixed independently of anything which might happen now. And thus while I was calculating the difficulties and the advantage, and how to avoid and gain them, the key clicked in the door; and before I had further time or mind to plot, I found myself rolling under Alicia's bed. There was laughter; the medley of voices down the hall. Alicia, Ethel Landon, and a man walked into the drawing-room!

"Boo-oh," exclaimed Alicia, "what a freezing night it is! I'll get some brandy — would you rather have whiskey, Doctor, or a cocktail?"

"Whiskey," said the doctor.

"And you, Ethel?"

"A little sherry."

"Sit down, doctor, take off your coat."

"I'll just throw it back. I'm going in a minute. I want to get that early train to Cleveland; and I must go back to the hotel."

"Won't you stay all night, Ethel?" said Alicia as she walked down the hall to the dining room.

"Oh, Alicia — I can't."

"Isn't this a lovely apartment?" said Ethel to the doctor.

"Yes, quite so."

"How long have you and Alicia known each other?"

"About ten years."

"You never met Mr. Kirby?"

"No."

"He's charming, quite wonderful. And very successful.

I am so happy for Alicia, after all her struggles and sorrows."

Alicia returned now with bottles and glasses, evidently upon a tray. I could count three bottles as she placed them on the table. I heard the glasses ring against each other. There was general conversation. "You didn't like the play, did you, Howard?" asked Alicia.

"No, to be truthful, I was bored. I remember that the first time I saw it I was carried away. I saw — well, I've forgotten for the moment the name of the actress who played Paula. But she did it more delicately than Mrs. Campbell did it to-night. There is something coarse, bitter, muscular about Mrs. Campbell's portrait."

"I think so, too," said Ethel.

"And besides," the doctor went on, "Pinero has only catered to the social criterion that Paula's life must have led her to the end he dramatized. That is, he takes what society called sin then, and does now, but not so much so, and punishes it. The play is kind of a document, a sort of tract against violation of the seventh commandment. And it didn't convince me to-night. It seemed theatrical; and I could see where and how it was put together. Tanqueray is such a fool."

"Don't say that," said Ethel. "He was a prince. He did everything he could to make Paula happy. But what I don't see is this: Suppose a man knows all about a woman, about her lovers and everything, and he loves her just the same and marries her, why can't they be happy?"

"Well," said the doctor, "Pinero goes out into the church-and-state purlieus and brings in some person, or some thing, to bring the past up; and knocks out the present."

"Like Hugh — who was Paula's lover and is now engaged to Tanqueray's daughter?"

"Yes."

"Well, suppose Paula had just laughed at the matter: Hugh had to marry some one. The daughter was not Paula's daughter. And as Tanqueray knew that Paula had

had lovers, was it so much that one of them married Tanqueray's daughter? The only thing to do was to keep the daughter from knowing it."

"Yes," said Ethel, "but you must confess that the psychologies are getting a little messy with such things; I think my flesh crawls a little at a situation like that."

"Yes," said Alicia, "no one with a sense of beauty could stand that. After all, the most veritable morals are those that rest upon our instincts and their radiations. And the feeling cannot be right, glowing and harmonious, between three people, one of whom has been the mistress of a man who has married the daughter of the man who has married the mistress. The thing is just as unæsthetic and intolerable as a false combination of colors, or disgusting sounds intermingled with true and lovely sounds. Have another drink, doctor, Ethel."

I could hear the movement of the bottles, the touch of the bottles upon the glasses.

"No," said Alicia, "there's something else, too. Mr. Kirby is now down the state attending the funeral of his grandmother — a wonderful old woman she was — she had thirteen children. You should have heard the talk she gave Skeet and me when we were down there — no twin beds — no new-fangled ideas! And when you consider 'The second Mrs. Tanqueray' the important thing is that Paula and Audrey were living in matrimony what she had lived with others out of it. Paula, in spite of her life, had some maternal instinct left — she wanted this step-daughter to love her. And she had no child of her own to satisfy her —."

Dr. Caldwell broke into a loud laugh.

"What makes you so brutal, Howard?" asked Alicia quickly.

"I beg your pardon," the doctor said.

"I should think you would. On my word! The drink must have gone to your head."

I was straining my ears now for further developments. I was vainly trying to imagine Alicia's expression, the doctor's,

Ethel's. There was a silence; and Ethel broke it by saying, "I wonder what time it is?" "Ten minutes of twelve," said the doctor, "and I must be off at once." "So must I," said Ethel. "Don't," said Alicia; "Arthur evidently cannot get back to-night. My cook is out to a wake. The maid may not be in till the Lord knows when. Really, Ethel, I insist."

"If you're going," said the doctor, "come. I'll see you home."

"She's not going," said Alicia. And the doctor arose and said:

"Many thanks, Alicia—I've had a wonderful evening—I liked the people at your dinner. And I'll tell Grace Hays all about it when I see her."

"You needn't trouble yourself, Howard."

"Why, are you two off?"

"Oh, Grace maddens me at times—she does just now." And the doctor said good night and left.

"We'd better go to bed," said Ethel; "I'm tired. You have no idea, Alicia, how you stared at Howard when he laughed." "I wish I had struck him dumb like the Medusa." "He was evidently off his guard for the moment." "Yes, off his guard, but on to his real track and self. It makes no difference what my conditions have been, or what I have done, I have a right to change my mind. And besides, a man with a professional secret in his possession has no right to betray it, even by a laugh." "I think so, too, well"—a yawn—"let's go to bed."

And Ethel went to the guest chamber. Alicia came to her room, disrobed and got in bed, making the mattress scratch faintly upon the springs. Here was I under her. How long should I have to wait? Could I get out without being caught? Hours seemed to pass. The apartment was still. Alicia had not turned or moved since a few minutes after she lay down. I untied my shoes and took them off. I rolled and slid softly from under the bed, stepped cautiously to the door, not looking back, for fear the white of my

face might arouse Alicia's half slumbering eyes. I stole noiselessly down the hall to the entrance door; there I put on my shoes, opened and closed the door with precaution but with no theatrical restraint. Then I strode back to Alicia's room, and snapped on the light. I sat on the bed looking at Alicia. If she were awake, or had been awake, she simulated slumber to perfection. At last she stirred, opened her eyes without starting, and said: "When did you come, Skeet?" "Just now." "Ethel's here." "Is she?" "I hope you didn't wake her. Probably not; you came in very softly, didn't you?" "Yes."

Liquid lights came in Alicia's fully awakened eyes; she stirred sensuously in the bed. Her lips lighted with a welcoming smile. Her hand caressed my arm in a gesture of tenderness. An amorous warmth came from her face and her half-revealed breast. I said: "I'm very tired. I just wanted to let you know I was here. Good night." And I went to my room.

CHAPTER LVII

ETHEL'S presence at the breakfast table prevented any intimate talk between Alicia and me. Besides, Alicia was not in perfect possession of her powers. She was pale, slightly yellow, distrait. I wanted to argue out all matters with Alicia when she was at her best. And though her physical energies were visibly out of balance, that condition may have been more than equalized by the sensitiveness of a nervous irritation.

Alicia was distant in her manner. Her brief, incisive words seemed dipped in some acrid suffusion. In the afternoon I was tempted to return to the apartment. I did not appear until dinner time.

And now Alicia was wholly changed, so far as ability for a combat was concerned. The cook had not returned, and she was in a rage over it; for there was no dinner. The maid couldn't do it well; and Alicia didn't feel like doing it. We could go out to dinner! Alicia was flushed with vitality, with the excitement over the domestic disorder. And as she faced me, her expression hardened; for I was facing her with a look of settled purpose and serious import. I sat down, without removing my coat. "Sit down," I said to Alicia. "Don't speak in that tone to me." "Stand if you wish; I haven't much to say to you." "I think I'll sit, for I have a good deal to say to you, about your charming affair with Martha Fisk, and how you were tumbled out of your plan to get her millions, and ——"

"I can make it easier, Alicia, and perhaps nearer to the truth. The word 'tumbled' is not so bad. Anyway, my engagement was broken; and I came to you and brought to your finger the ring I had given Martha."

"So I have suspected — you ——"

"Yes, but it's a good diamond, and I came to you a man in every sense of the word; and I have loved you, if the word means anything; and I have been a good husband to you. And the fact that I was engaged to Martha Fisk, and had given her a ring, and came to you offering you matrimony, when I was free from Martha, and brought the ring that was a symbol of a tie, now broken; and here renewed freshly with you — all of this makes for nothing spurious in me, or in the transaction anywhere. I have not cheated you in any particular. And you can't bring the battle up to me, and put me in the wrong, when it is you who are in the wrong. I won't let you. You're a cheat, Alicia, — a false pretense. You have defrauded me. You married me, knowing that you were half a woman, that there was nothing left of you but your passional nature. You sold me for honest money of full weight a field of apparently rich soil, like the Texas hardpan that will grow nothing. You had been to Dr. Caldwell. I know all about it. And you came to me half a woman."

"It's a lie," said Alicia. But she was completely confounded, breathless.

"What's a lie?"

"That I went to Dr. Caldwell and then came to you."

Alicia was convulsed with nervous collapse. Her hands and head shook. Her voice failed her.

"No, even that's not a lie; for the two things occurred in that order. And if you did not do this with reference to a marriage with me, you did it with reference to some marriage — some chance — you're a confidence woman; and our marriage contract lacks one of the considerations that make it valid. I want to be divorced from you, and at once."

"You beast — you ——"

"Don't say that to me," I said; and swift as light the plan entered my head of making grounds for a divorce here and now. Accordingly I went to Alicia and seized her.

"Don't you dare," she said, in a loud, hysterical voice, her eyes glaring. The maid came running into the room. I took hold of Alicia again; but as any physical laying on

of hands is cruelty in law, I was not brutal — I did not need to be. "Don't, Mr. Kirby," cried the maid, in terror. I shook Alicia. I turned to the maid: "Leave the room — go out." The maid retreated, wringing her hands.

"Now," I said, "I have given you a ground for divorce. Get a lawyer. I have a lawyer. We can easily arrange the money matters. To-morrow there will be packers here, to pack or to move these furnishings wherever you wish. I give them to you. But you must vacate the apartment at once. I surrender the lease in the morning."

Alicia arose and walked quickly into her room. I packed a bag and went to the club.

The next morning when I came to the apartment the maid met me with the message that Mrs. Kirby wanted the things sent to the Ontario storage. Alicia was not there. The packers came. The furnishings were stored as Alicia wished them. And I returned to the club, and to the closing of my office in preparation of leaving the city for good.

For it all came to this: I was nearing thirty-three years of age. I had given years of my life to a calling that I abhorred. What was the law but professional scoundrelism? Scarcely anything besides. The ancient sophists sold instruction in disputation and rhetoric. So do lawyers. But the sophists only corrupted a few minds. Lawyers, legalism, corrupt courts and states, and foul the fountains of justice. They train their minds to aid and abet extortion, robbery, trespass, and the taking of life. They evolve rules, and then apply them, by which truth is strangled, and fair dealing aborted, maimed, or destroyed. They sell their trained intellects in the market to do whatever they are hired to do. They aggrandize their influence and their standing through churches, clubs, political alliances; and then they gauge their charges by their ability to bribe, to wheedle, to terrify the sentries of the temple. Their fees are based upon what is termed their prominence; even courts allow fees upon that basis; and their prominence depends upon the pharisaical or mercenary alliances that

they have made; upon the newspaper notoriety that they have created, concerning the foolish dignities that are conferred upon them; or concerning the cases they have won by fair or by foul means. But there are subtle great ones hiding in the jungles of the city, like huge anacondas, waiting for prey, whose names excite apprehension, on account of their clandestine power to move with surreptitious and sinuous maleficence to their ends. They have made themselves masters of reason, or of sophistry, as one may choose to regard it; in the dexterity of which any morality turns to absurdity. They are the demonstrators of the idea that as man has been placed here with great hungers, hunger for food and for mates, all ethics are subdued to these hungers in exigencies or in ambitions — it matters not. From this body of trained hirelings of the reason the judges themselves are selected, themselves characterized and corrupted by the prostitution from which they have been graduated. And it is in vain, and in hypocrisy, that they criticize the crookedness, the overreaching of the lawyers; or seek to elevate what is called the law. The nature of the profession precludes such a reformation. The whole scheme of lawyers and judges is a mass of maggots feeding upon dying or putrescent bodies. And I had been a part of this mass, and one of them, though always against my will. But now I had set my face against it. I had determined upon a new life, cost what it might. First, I meant to leave the city for an indefinite time. Second, I meant to heal myself of the passions which my life had aroused and kept inflamed: suspicion, hatred, enmity, revenge. If I could not bring to my life clear vision, serenity, love, and a measure of confidence in my fellows, why live? For such a life there is nothing but torture and increasing exhaustion.

I went to George Higgins, asking him to let me have his log cabin on the Rock River; and for an indefinite time. He was happy to do this. He heard my story about Alicia. I left the legal matter of procuring my divorce in his hands. I closed my office and made ready to leave the city.

CHAPTER LVIII

I WROTE Bob Hayden about my difficulties, trying to give him, as another human soul, an opportunity to understand me. There was doubtless anguish in my letter; for I felt a horror before writing it, and while writing it, concerning the real mystery of my soul's fate, its isolation and its perplexity; and that horror was deepened by fears that one may die and leave his secret unguessed.

On the morning that I left I went for the last time to the office, that I had now given up, to get my mail. I had sold my library, my desk and equipment, to my associates. I gathered up the letters that were there for me, walked to the street with a feeling of elation, of superb freedom, and got on the train which was to bear me to the village near which was the log cabin of George Higgins.

As soon as the train had moved from under the dark shed, I took my letters from my pocket and began to look them over. One was from Bob Hayden. Nothing in the way of a divination, a profound look into my nature and my circumstances, could have been more appropriate, more illuminating to my tired eyes, which now refused to focus upon the problems with which I was surrounded. Slowly and concentratedly I read Bob Hayden's letter:

"Dear Skeet: Your letter gives me concern; and I feel very deeply for you. I only wish that this misfortune and the misfortunes which have befallen you, some of which I knew before you wrote me, had overtaken some one that I do not know, instead of some one that I have as deep an affection for as I have for you. One trouble with you is (the chief trouble perhaps) that you were born lonely, and

you are destined to be lonely always. This loneliness drives you to seek relief through association with another human being. And, psychologically considered, the thing that comes nearest to annihilating this loneliness is love — romantic love. While it lasts it does really blot out the loneliness. The union of one personality with another overcomes the spiritual lacuna. Weld while the iron is hot, as well as strike while the iron is hot. Hence when two natures are at a white heat their metals fuse and all is well — for the time, at least. So it is that you who are both detached and lonely and incandescent too, are driven by the fiery energy of your nebulous whirl which seeks to become a world, and tortured in proportion as the creative process is delayed, or defeated. To make up one's mind to accept the fate, to say this must be for me, as men sometimes are compelled to say I have heart disease, or cancer, is of great soothing and philosophical value. And as time goes on I expect you to come to this. In the meantime may you incur good Fates without falling into the clutches of revengeful Furies. I can't altogether make you out, but this I see; you have the very genius of self-laceration; and, what is more idiosyncratic and quite beyond my analysis, you have that kind of genius which arouses between you and every human being you approach, as if by fatal necessity, a whirling dust of howling fiends. Your centrifugal and centripetal spirituality cross, and make trouble, by drawing and repelling in ways inexplicable and beyond fathoming. I see you generous and noble, forgiving even those you hate; I see you doing things for people, and helping them in ways quite wonderful, and beyond what nearly any one else could or would do for them; and yet I see you paid up with ingratitude and sometimes with meanness; the howling fiends arise and prod you with javelins and pikes wherever you enter and take a place with your fellows, and particularly with the wimming. Your figure of the clods and the clay of you is good, and explanatory; for independence of mind, such as you have, and ability to take care of yourself, such as you have, excite envy

and a certain malice. There is something in human nature which makes men want to annoy or pull down a man who asks nothing of them. It's good fun to see a self-reliant fellow call for help, or come over and capitulate to the general fraternity. But as to gratitude: that's a spiritual energy or movement; and after a benefit is received most men have no actuating, propelling principle to gratitude in return for benefits; just because, among other reasons, a return of the favor may be too difficult; and at the moment there may be no material gain in sight to balance the difficulty of returning good for a good received. I can't speak with much authority about your domestic trouble. Only I feel that here again your genius for arousing a cloud of devils has exercised its worst power. Something in you has excited and keeps bristling and venomous something in the nature of Alicia. All of us have a quality, and that quality may excite poison in another. And once that is excited, the whole personal relationship becomes chaotic, insurgent, active and tumultuous, which no reason and no sex attraction can quell or control. But I think you will find some one to exorcise these devils in time; that moment has not arrived for you. Consult an astrologer! Think it all over. And remember that I am your friend and send you affectionate good wishes for happy days to come.

“Truly,

“Bob.”

I looked up from reading this letter to find that the train was rattling through the limits of the switch yard. We were approaching the suburbs. And I tried to extract from Bob's letter the profoundest essence of its meaning. He had hinted at elusive truths. I caught the gleam of a reality through his approximate words, and I thought of all it suggested until I arrived at the village and hired a taxi to drive me to the cabin.

The fourth section of my telescope was extended now, though I saw nothing clearer with it so — not yet.

FOURTH SECTION

CHAPTER LIX

GEORGE HIGGINS had told me of a boy named Henry North who would be willing to help me, and live with me in the log cabin. I sent for him over the hill. He was about nineteen, strong and amiable, and became a devoted man-servant. There was the wood to get for the kitchen stove, and water to fetch; and when we needed provisions he ran the Ford into the village for them, or walked in. Often I went with him, stopping outside the village until he came back. I did not wish to see a newspaper. I did not wish to renew my touch with the outer world.

We reached the roadway by circling the base of the hill that backgrounded the cabin. Once on this level the surrounding country opened up to the eye, rolling valleys and hills, forestry here and there. And in these September days the azures of the sky, the soft clouds floating slowly, as if dying away with the summer, lent a pathos to the stillness of the air.

It was only a mile and a half to the village; but directly on top of the hill one began to pass at once a long row of poplars standing up as straight as candlesticks, and which made a hedge for an estate; and through the poplars, over and between the bushes which flanked them, the roof of a country home could be seen, of gray and blue slate. Henry told me that a Mrs. Norris lived here, who was nearly always away. She was a widow always traveling. Henry knew scarcely anything about her. He had never seen her. She was a myth to the neighboring people. Her chauffeur, her servants were not much known to the farmers and work people. They kept to themselves; or else they went with their mistress when she traveled.

Henry and I took many walks together. We tramped all the woods around the cabin. To our east was a sort of artist colony; and sometimes I met some of the artists when walking in the wood that lay around the hill where their bungalows were situated. I spent many hours sitting by the river, looking up at the rim of my own hill. It was quite barren of trees. Its rim with the arch of the sky formed a lunette, decorated at night by stars and the moon; by day, by clouds. The spears of grass which stuck up against the sky from its outline gave a mystical fascination to the realm beyond. They trembled, beckoned, tried to speak, it seemed. I was again fascinated by the imagination of the hill and what is beyond it. "Over the hills and far away" is more than a line of verse to me! It marks the explanation of a psychology, perhaps a pre-natal dream. And I lay for hours by the river looking at the rim of my hill, watching the clouds skim over it, touch it, and disappear in the beyond, the lost valleys of grass and of dreams in the miles of country farther on.

But many of my nights were sorrowful and exhausting. If Henry did not go out, he went to bed early. And so I was quite alone, walking the floor and thinking. I went over my life from its infancy. I thought through all my days with Mitch Miller. I fixed my reflections upon that boyhood attempt of mine to be Huckleberry Finn, because Mitch wished me to, and Horatio because he wished me to. Then Winifred was much in my mind. Then my submission to my father in his will to make me a lawyer tortured me. I could see myself going here and there, never being myself, never doing what it was my nature to do. I had rioted with Roger Farnsworth; I had known Madame Lefevre and Julie Valentine; I had engaged myself to Martha Fisk; I had married Alicia Adams. But I had never been myself. I had been caught and forced into the practice of law, just as Mitch, without meaning to be, was a witness to the murder of Joe Rainey, and in consequence was held by the court as a witness. I could look back and see that that was a symbol of life's distractions and tangles; that when Mitch traded

his watch for a stereotype, that was a symbol of giving one's time and vitality for the hard and doubtful wages of letters. But what were the events of my Chicago life the symbol of? Of what was it the symbol that I did not get into newspaper work, but did embark upon the profession of law? Of what was Martha Fisk and my engagement to her the symbol of? Of what was Alicia the symbol? — Alicia who held me and repelled me at once; Alicia barren; Alicia a moth-woman, flitting before my hands, never understood, never captured. One cannot know the nature of the shadow until one knows the substance which cast it. We cannot know what these events prophesy, what interpretations they give to future years until those years have been lived, and the events are seen near and far, and in all their relations to the whole of one's life.

Walking the floor night after night I thought of these things, and of my life, which seemed so wasted and so worthless. A decade gone in futile labor, in imbecile mirth, in relationships mostly, which were like the grabbing of hands upon the runner. I had been stayed, turned aside, in the race. I had torn away and rushed on. But I had failed. I had reached no goal, no prize.

And yet I kept thinking of myself as the clay being moulded into the figure. These hands had flattened or shrunk my substance, other hands had sharpened or drawn it out. How could I see in what manner I had been shaped? Perhaps if I could stand off from myself I could see myself as a figure, fashioned or in the fashioning. I tried to survey my own figure carefully and with critical eyes. I ended in an analysis.

I had known discord, hatred, enmity, slavery, pain, ugliness, despair, fear, desire, lust, pride, discouragement — all enervating passion. My contact with people, my life, had taught me the meaning of these passions. And here in the stillness of the country, removed from their excitants, I felt them passing from me. Before they passed I analyzed them. I considered what they had done to me. They had furnished the material for great energies and labors — but energies and

labors that pulled me down, and rewarded me not at all I had been torn and wracked by them, like an engine propelled by a force too powerful for its structure. I could see that the soul can surrender itself to these destroying dæmons, or call to its aid and its growth the beneficent angels of Friendship, Love, Courage, Beauty. I wished to be noble, free, happy, at peace. I had sought these gifts with unwearied zeal in all the tumult and noise of the city. I had in woman hoped for the beauty and the inspiration for which I starved and aspired. From the death of Winifred onward I had lived in the dream that she would lead me to hands of understanding and love. I still, somehow, believed in my star, my destiny. But I was yet upon the road of the great adventure, and not arrived at its hospitality and its life.

These were the things of which I thought, walking the room at night, looking out of the window at the moon, looking over the rim of the hill. And all the while the youth Henry slept. Or if he woke, or chanced to come in upon my vigils, he glanced curiously at me and went his way.

I had brought with me a few books; the Bible, Æschylus, Goethe, Plato, some others. But I did not read. The days went by. I lay by the river looking up into the sky or over the rim of the hill, always in thought. My heart hurt me. And at night I walked the floor and thought. I carried in my pocket a small pad upon which I jotted down the thoughts that came to me about friendship, freedom, beauty, hope, nobility; and I began to create stories which interpreted these states of the soul; and soon I began to write verses.

At the end of the month I had a good-sized manuscript. It was a book calculated to carry the healing of life-giving contemplations; and to drive out of the soul the passions which scar, depress, sear and weaken and embitter. And thus out of these reflections and these realizations in rhythmical language I found an occupation and a joy.

The meadows were full of yellow daisies and white yarrow now, goldenrod, pye-weed. Henry got a boat, and we rowed far down the river, to see the hills as we drifted along. We

took to the uplands at other times to look over the valleys, or walk along the shaded roads. We tramped the woods; or sometimes hunted, or rather Henry hunted, for I had no gun; I was content to follow and carry what game we bagged. One afternoon as we were returning to the cabin through the wood around the artists' colony, we sat for a moment on a log, before proceeding to the fence which divided the wood from the land where the cabin stood. We heard steps, and looking up I saw Alicia with Ethel Landon. They were dressed in walking skirts and canvas shoes. A thrill went through me as I saw Alicia. Her cheeks were flushed; her eyes liquid and brilliant. She was laughing, showing her beautiful teeth. And as they passed us, Alicia bowed and smiled, hiding any rancor, if she felt any — even with a sort of kindly patronization. Ethel was more expressive. "Why, Skeet," she said. She took my hand and paused to say a few words. Alicia did not walk on, but stood with Ethel, looking at me quite calmly, betraying no resentment, evincing nothing but an amiable neutrality. They were living at the artists' colony, playing the piano together. They would be there some days yet. In a few minutes they were on their way through the wood, talking happily to each other. I sat on the log and watched them. Alicia was surely master of herself.

And sometimes as I thought of Alicia it occurred to me that our disrupted lives came about through a life-long illusion on my part that sex and intellect can be harmoniously fused. I saw myself forever drawn to women of intellect, stirred passionately by the feminine genius, intellect, when at its best; and inversely seeking through passion the feminine genius, as a means of finding passion in its purest form. This was the fateful circle that my being moved in, ever seeking its realization. But in this pursuit of romantic hope and union irreconcilable disharmonies are incurred; and my marriage to Alicia demonstrated them. I found Alicia's mind through passion; but I also experienced it in moments of purely intellectual association. In passion its sharp

projections were evaded or accommodated to the swords that glistened highest and brightest in my spiritual equipment. On the level of thinking human beings, thrown into intimate life together, these several extended points of our minds interfered with each other, or struck through the vacant and lower levels of our natures, penetrating and wounding them. The figure is not beautiful, but a serpent can fold back its fangs when taking food. Such are the difficulties of alliances between men and women of independent or gifted minds: who also have a passion for each other. The case is rare where the adjustment is tolerable. If men and women are part of a timber that has been broken, the splinters must fit together, and not prick in the reunion of the parts.

In a day or so after my meeting with Alicia, Henry and I went to the village for provisions, passing, as we always did, the row of poplars which screened the estate, and shut from view all but the slate roof of the summer house of the unknown Mrs. Norris. Henry said to me: "Mrs. Norris is going to have a fine crop of apples this fall." "What does she do with them?" "Well, she gives them away. My father was talking to one of her men just yesterday, and he said that Mrs. Norris told him to give us what apples we wanted. She is in New York, they say. She only comes here now and then to rest up or entertain. She has a herd of the finest Jersey cows you ever saw. They do dairying; and she gives milk away to all the poor in the village. There never was such a generous woman. Every one loves her around here. Nobody knows her, though, or hardly ever sees her."

We came to a bridge and stood looking down into the little stream that flowed under it on its way to the river. The clouds were reflected in its calm current. And again I thought of my life, of myself; I was meditating these poems now in all my waking hours. I woke with fresh ideas and images, I was beginning to be healed, here in the country with opportunity to find myself. Ah! I must write a poem

on Death, and one on Memory. Did I not know Death? Where was that self of me that had played with Mitch Miller? That self that had known the beauty of Winifred Hervey; that harsh and combative self of the city? Surely if in these successive lives I was no longer the I that I had been in other places, what would Death be, but a change and a forgetting? And Memory? From the hand of my grandmother who treasured badges and watches and trinkets, to the hand which built pyramids or temples, or celebrated wars, or put together Arthurian legends, or the writers of the Gospels and the makers of Christianity — what were these things but the subservice of Memory, the devotion to the muse Mnemosyne?

When we returned to the cabin I found a bouquet of yellow daisies, white yarrow, and ferns tied with a fresh ribbon of yellow satin to my door-knob. I took it off and looked at it, a great tenderness rising in my heart. No one but Alicia could do this — and surely she felt a resurgence of love in coming to my door with this tribute. Why was she here at the artists' colony near me, if not to follow me, to win me back? Was it true that she had always had a love for me which her nature prevented her from fully expressing? Did pride or my own nature make her inarticulate? And now, whatever she had done or failed to be to me, I could see with great clearness that my own growth depended upon magnanimity toward her. I must in my thoughts of her fix my eyes upon her graces and her virtues, upon the beauty that was in her. I must do this in order to write the poems I was brooding upon! Indeed, must I not do this always and with all persons and with life itself in order to create beauty? There is the strength of satire, but the greater strength of beauty, — the strength that can remember and express what is lovely and forget and ignore what is bitter, deformed, black and twisted and decaying. This was my mood now, my life. I wished to escape wholly from the past. Alicia, as I had sensed her, was in that past I wished to forget; and if there were sweetness and beauty in Alicia I wished to remem-

ber them and nothing else. I was really capitulating to a fatigue, living and trying to re-create upon a strength that could not keep in vision and analysis all the elements of life good and bad. I was making the best use I knew how of a weakness, perhaps, but with the purpose to gain a great strength. Out of the strength I was writing, and from time to time I was printing verses over that old pseudonym of "Willis Aronkeil." Bob Hayden had written me that they were excellent, and were creating talk and a stir. I sat in the obscurity of this false name and found a new happiness in the conviction that I was giving delight.

CHAPTER LX

ONE afternoon I climbed the hill and entered the woods on the uplands, and began to follow paths here and there in an excursion of exercise and searching for new places around my abode. On descending a little path between ferns, and turning around a corner made by a projecting rock, I came face to face with Alicia. She stood like a Medusa, taking me in with her great black eyes, motionless as a statue. There was the stillness of a cathedral in the woods, broken only now and then by the far-off caw of a crow. A soft, languorous light was in the air; we were environed by the mystery and silence of the wood. My nerves were now so rested and strong, I was so in the undisturbed possession of the amenities of my nature that I could smile a recognition and a greeting to Alicia, which I did. She returned it with grace and charm. I began to wonder if it were within the realm of probable things for us to come together again. Still it could not be, unless Alicia came out of her mysterious self with frankness and met me halfway upon a common ground of accommodation. Finally, could I overlook the fraud she had practiced on me?

Alicia said: "How do you happen to be here? How did you know I was here?" "I didn't," I said. "You came here after I did." "No, I know the day you arrived. I had been here then a number of days when you came. I have been coming to the colony for years — long before I knew you. Ethel and I were here together the summer before I even met you." "Well," I said good-naturedly, "this country here is big enough for both of us. I shall not interfere with you in any way. I suppose you are sure this meeting is perfectly accidental."

Alicia stared at me. "Good afternoon," I said, and walked on into the wood. Alicia went her way as silent as a shadow. I came out finally at the road, but at a distance of nearly three miles from the village; then tramped on to the village store to get tobacco and lead pencils. Here was Henry with the car, just ready to start back to the cabin. He had bought bacon and bread and eggs; and we drove leisurely along the road, past the poplar trees and around the base of the hill. It had taken me a great deal over an hour to walk to the village, and some minutes to drive to the cabin. I began to calculate the time, when I came to the door and found hanging to the knob a pretty basket of blue and yellow flowers, with a cover and a clasp. Inside the basket was a cake, a package of premium bacon tied with a blue ribbon. Why would Alicia do these things? Why the bouquet? And why this basket? Why, if she was prompted to these generousities, did she treat me with such reserve, with such brevity of speech when we met, as we had met twice, by chance? If she was trying to win me back, these meetings had furnished the opportunity for speech that makes for understanding. I was touched by these gifts, their thoughtfulness, even while I was firm in my feeling that Alicia could never be anything more to me. "Take these in, Henry," I said. "With what you have bought we have plenty of bacon now for a long time. If this goes on, we won't have to market much. The ravens, or some one, is feeding us."

The afternoon was one of clearest azures, white clouds and the far-afield rhythm of the crickets. I climbed nearly to the top of the hill, lay down in the grass where I could look at the bend in the river, and nearer where it glittered in the sun between the trees by the store. Puffs of air murmured about me. I took out of my pocket the silver case in which I carried the picture of Winifred. I looked up into the deep azure, and my thought began to search for this soul so long lost to me. I closed my eyes and sent my soul wheeling into far spaces, like an eagle. I was searching for Winifred. The agony of concentration became too much. I turned over on

my stomach and buried my head in my arms, and began to think back into the past, into those days of walks around Marshalltown with Winifred. The tears oozed out of my eyes when I thought of this girl who had been so deeply my friend, so understanding and devoted, so cruelly taken from me. I raised my head and looked into the lunette above the hill. I saw the spears of timothy nodding on the rim of the hill against the clear sky. The puffing wind murmured in and around my ears. For the rest, such stillness! Then without changing my position I closed my eyes and tried to summon Winifred into my presence. I opened my eyes, half-blinded with tears; and there above me, like the head of a child angel upon a gravestone, was a face. Nothing visible but the face, with a hoydenish hat. Under the rim of the hat strands of reddish yellow hair; below, affrayed eyes, pulsating like planets, a smile on the lips — I rubbed my eyes then, to make sure that I was not dreaming. I was not. I started to arise. She had disappeared. I climbed to the rim of the hill; and there stood a woman!

She was dressed in a plaid skirt, a blue silk jacket. She wore walking shoes. She was little, yet compact of build; the shoulders rather thick and broad; the hips, her lower body, delicate, yet fully developed. Her complexion was bright, as of a leaf smitten by frost; the hair at the side of her head yellow as corn-tassel; and I could see that this was essentially its color. An impish tuft of this golden hair stood straight up like a brush from her conical forehead. Her eyes were blue, splotted with agates. They danced and waved like lights passing over convex mirrors. Her nose was arched; her lips, delicate yet rich, subtly bowed. The whole face was one of angelic impishness, elfin prankishness and imagination. She extended her hand to me with a gesture quick and masculine, revealing an arm that shot forth to great length, showing a thickness of muscle and adiposity in its upper part. But in a voice that was sweet as music she said: "I am Becky Norris — Mr. Skeeters Kirby." And then we both laughed, laughed

laughed, laughed from a chuckle to a rapid cachinnation which ended in a diminuendo of chuckles. "Perhaps she amused you?" "Yes, certain Americans always amuse me." "Evidently you are a regular American." "I hope so." "Well, tell me, why were you watching me?" "For fun." "You did send the bouquet, you did send the bacon. What makes you interested in me?" "Because you remind me of Tom Sawyer." "Tom Sawyer! Well, Becky — here we are: Tom and Becky. You like me a little, don't you, Becky?" "No." "Come here." "No." I ran up the hill to catch her. She ran, but could not escape me. I caught her. She was breathless now. I crushed her to me, planting long kisses upon her lips. Our beings quivered with sensual delights. The air was soft and warm, we were in a remote place, not a sound broke the fall silence. There was a carpet of moss just to her right. "Let us sit here," I said. She broke loose from me, laughed and danced away, ran around the tree and down to the level leading to the river's shore. Then she started for the road. And I had to follow. "This is your way," she said, pointing along the valley to my cabin. "I'm going over the hill. Good-by." "When can I see you again?" "You may come over to tea Tuesday at 4.30." "Good! I'll be there."

Just then a hunter fired his gun by the river's shore. I turned momentarily to see what was doing. When I looked toward Becky again, she was halfway up the hill, dancing backward and laughing. I walked slowly to the cabin, filled with mixed speculations.

CHAPTER LXI

My mail was forwarded to me day by day. Henry went to the box by the road over the hill to bring me my letters. The next day there was this letter from my sister Myrtle, dated Florence :

“Dear Skeet : I was astonished when I got a letter from father saying that you had separated from Alicia and had left your profession. What is the matter with you? You are getting too old now to allow your erratic tendencies to control you. You must settle down. I don’t blame you for leaving her; you should not have married the woman to begin with. But how are you going to live if you do not work at something? I wish you could be here to share some of this life with us. Perhaps you can later; but if you marry again do look out and find the right woman first. There are lots of Americans here all the time lately; and some of them find out who I am and make themselves known to me, often in the most curious ways. Last spring as Humbert and I were coming out of the Boboli Gardens I was approached by an American woman who said: ‘Aren’t you the Countess Speranza?’ (Contessa is the correct title). The Count was amused and a little annoyed; but I said, ‘Yes.’ And the woman said, ‘I am Becky Norris of Chicago,’ and extended her hand to me. The surprising thing was that the gardens are only open to the public on Sundays and Thursdays; and this was Tuesday. So how did she get in? Well, I could see that she was charming, quite American that way, but good-hearted and gay and we finally were glad to be asked by her to tea. I found her interesting, witty and amusing; quite amusing, but a strange moth-woman all in all. On arriving in America she sent me a cable, later a letter, but I have not written her. I told her

about you, just mentioned that I had a brother in Chicago ; and you will have no trouble in getting acquainted with her if you wish. She is free, has a large income and you might like her ; and now that you are free you might adventure with her — who knows ? I simply write you this as a tip. I spoke of you as my brother to her. Mother loves it here ; and she and the count are excellent friends, speaking in Italian a good deal, as mother has done wonders in acquiring the language. I send you love and best wishes.

“Myrtle.”

I had this letter in my pocket when I went to Becky's for tea on Tuesday. I passed through iron gates and walked between a circular row of bushes to the door. The house was of brick, low and rambling, of English design. The maid Nora came to the door ; and I was making ready to enter as soon as she opened it. When she did so, she said, without waiting to hear what I was there for, “Mrs. Norris is in Chicago.” How did Nora know I wished to see Mrs. Norris ? Did she know who I was ? Did she know I was expected ? Or was I ? I was about to blurt out that I had an appointment for tea. Instead I said, “Oh, well ! be kind enough to say Mr. Kirby called.” “Yes, Mr. Kirby.” I turned away and walked toward the gate, looking back down the hill to the west of the house into the laden apple trees and the valley running down to a meadow which sloped to a forest nearly a mile away.

What could this woman mean ? Surely she knew that I was coming. I had come. And there was no apology or explanation from any one, and no message. I had a suspicion that Becky was in the house. My pride was a little stung. But I could know nothing about the matter. I walked back to the cabin in a study, discovering that in new hurts old hurts are forgotten ; and that in Becky, whether she hurt me or whether she pleased me, there was oblivion from Alicia. For in this brief meeting with Becky my heart had taken fire.

The next day I turned with renewed energy to my writing. But I found that this experience with Becky had given a slight acidity to my emotion. I could not contemplate things of beauty, of faith, of generous feeling with the same concentrated mind when the poison of these feminine stings coursed through me. I had to summon fair reasons for her breaking the engagement, and try to convince myself that she misunderstood the time, or that she was suddenly called to Chicago and could leave no explanations for me.

I was receiving day by day the most laudatory letters from Bob Hayden concerning the poems printed under the name of Willis Aronkeil. I was busily writing now every day, correcting and improving what I had done. I was happy in the cabin. Henry was a joy to me. He was always at my command somewhere near. Two weeks had gone by. It was late September. The air was cold and sweet like cool wine. The forests were a blaze of color; the slanting lights, the lines of green and gold, fell through my window on the chintz-covered couch. And I could look around my room with a great delight at the comforts which surrounded me: my books on the pine shelf; a fire in the fireplace, and Henry's Airedale slumbering by its delicate heat. And a day comes when my cup of happiness is full. I have received a letter from Eastern publishers, asking for the right to publish a book of what I had written; and as I am making ready to go on the noon train the next day to Chicago, there is a knock on my door. I open. It is Nora, Becky's maid. "Mrs. Norris wishes you to come to dinner to-night," she said. "Oh," I exclaimed in a happiness not to be concealed — "well — I'm delighted. What time?" "Dinner at seven, Mr. Kirby. But Mrs. Norris wants you to come before if you can; about five." "Yes; thank Mrs. Norris. I'll be there."

I could scarcely wait for the time to go. Why? Was some new enchantment over me already? No matter! If death be ahead, one walks gladly into these hours of sorcery.

Nora met me at the door with a smile and a manner of gracious welcome scarcely existing where it is not inspired by the mistress of the house. I entered a low hallway, the ceiling of red brick; and I could look through to a space made by this hallway, and a transverse passage, under an arch of brick. Following Nora, I came into this transept face to face with the glass panel of a door which opened upon a porch overlooking the apple trees, the valley, and the hills beyond. At the right I glanced into a dining room, the floor done in blue tile; at the left, there was a large living room. I took a hurried view of the rugs, the furnishings, a piano. And then there was a voice, "hello." I located it at the head of the stair, retraced and looked up; and there stood Becky, a smile of delight and welcome lighting her face; no longer a little girl, but womanly and gentle and kind. "Up this way," she said. "I live up here." I ascended and went into a little library, following Becky, who danced ahead of me. No sooner did we enter than she began to talk of her books and show them to me. I put my arms around her. She nestled her head against my shoulder. "You are adorable, Becky, — adorable." "Oh, you don't know me. I have a horrid disposition. No one could ever get along with me except my husband. Look, here's his picture." She showed me a photograph in a silver frame, picking it up from her study table. "Don't you love him? He adored me. He did everything for me. And you must love him — You do, don't you?" "I like the face exceedingly," I said. And, strangely, it looked as Mitch Miller might have looked had he lived to maturity. "Every one loved him. He was the soul of generosity, fair-play. His word was like a gold coin, taken by every one. He would love you, I know; for you are a little like him — oh, yes, a lot like him." "How so?" "Oh, in a kind of simplicity — truthfulness, naturalness." "You don't know me." "Yes, I do. And you look these things." "That's very kind of you to say." "Have you ever loved any one, Skeet?" "Yes." I took out Winifred's picture and showed

her. Becky said: "I love her—I really love her." "Do you, Becky?" "Yes; and think what it will be for you to love my husband and for me to love this girl—what was her name?" "Winifred." "For me to love Winifred. I think it wonderful if we as friends love the ones that have been our lovers or husbands in the past that existed before we were friends." "Oh, but you see I've been married. I married. I am trying to be divorced. It was a bitter experience—and I've been trying to heal myself here and get hold of myself." "Skeet! that isn't the woman—Alicia Adams, that I mocked you about?" "Yes." "I'm sorry—forgive me. We both ran wild that afternoon."

"Tell me," I asked, "why you disappeared that Tuesday when I came to tea." "Why," Becky answered, "the time was Monday; you didn't come; the next day I had to go to Chicago." "Monday," I echoed. I studied Becky. She looked at me, broke into a grin and danced away as I approached her. "Monday! you said Tuesday—I know you did." "No!" and she smiled and tried to turn to something else. But I said, "It was Tuesday—I heard you so plainly. I came here, and Nora said you had gone to Chicago. I was dreadfully disappointed. Come, tell me what was the matter?" Becky clicked her tongue against her teeth, picked up a copy of Plotinus from her table and said, "Have you read Plotinus?" "Have I read it? My dear, I have a copy at the cabin; I read it ten years ago and more." Becky smiled as if some inner secret was hers; and began to talk rapidly of many things. As I followed her around the room I saw other books, favorites of mine, lying here and there, all new. Why? How could she know they were dear to me? If she did know it, why procure them? Was I to be a familiar in these rooms in the future?

I was about to take Myrtle's letter out of my pocket and read to Becky that part of it which stated that Myrtle had spoken to Becky of me in Italy. Still the letter had such revealing words in it of Becky I was afraid she might

see them, if she insisted on reading the whole of the letter and I had to yield or withhold it. And if I withheld it, I might have to give a reason for doing so. I simply said: "Didn't my sister speak to you of me?" Becky shook her head. And the door was closed to further inquiry.

"Let's see the sunset colors," she said with sudden rapture, her countenance dazzling, like a brazier into which incense is thrown, making gold and azure flames. She opened the door and we descended to the lawn by the porch, and looked across the blue valley, deepening into black. Over the hills were purple clouds, shot through with fiery glories, as of a crucible emptied of molten steel. To our left was the full moon, pale as a piece of pewter — one star beside it! Home-faring crows were flying across the hollow between our eminence and the hills beyond. Becky was silent, her eyes grave and large — an expression of exquisite refinement in her face. "How beautiful!" I said. She did not speak. She slipped her arm through mine. We ascended to her library.

We walked about the room, looking at her books. Becky then turned the subject to reading again. Had I read *Æschylus*? She began to expound a theory of *Æschylus*, the philosophy of his tragedies. With great fluency she made the analysis; I recognized it as the substance and to some extent, the words of the preface to the Bohn edition — the one I had. Hearing this, I asked, "Where is your *Æschylus*?"

She picked the book from her table. It was also new, but no date written in it. And then she spoke of Lotze and Fichte, of her weeks of struggle with "their philosophies." In this brief space so much was said that the conversation was a confusion, as of many instruments playing in tune, but not in time. My being was occupied now with other feelings than of these things. We stood by a window at last, and I drew my face close to hers, looking into her eyes. They were like blue flames, leaping, devouring the substance of her spirit, which was as quickly replenished. I

offered my lips to hers, but she bent her brow, evidently to signify a spiritual caress. Then she turned and fled, leaving me alone.

CHAPTER LXII

I WAS dozing. I heard a door open. There was a step in the room. The lights were snapped on. I sat up. There was Becky before me in pearls, in silk. She was no longer the little girl, the hoyden, the woodland creature, the Puck. She was now the queen. I rose to my feet and came toward her. She extended both her hands to me. I kissed them, and looked into her face to find a smile so gentle, but so grave, upon her lips. Presently Nora announced dinner. And so we descended to the dining room to feast and to talk.

The dinner being over, Becky told me her story. Her mother was in Ohio, she knew nothing of the whereabouts of her father. He had disappeared ten years before and had never been heard of since. She had a number of sisters. The family lived on a large farm in Ohio. The father was a drunkard. He put the girls to work running rakes, ploughs, mowers, planters. Thus they were bred in the sunshine, in the open air. And hence Becky's vitality and strength. Becky said: "My father used to whip me unmercifully. He had a rawhide and he would catch me and beat me. At first I'd beg and scream for mercy, and then my back grew numb. It wouldn't hurt after he had beaten me for a while; only I could just feel the soft blood oozing and flowing down my back and on to my legs." "Why did he beat you?" I asked. "For anything — anything that would come up that displeased him. And then he would be trying to break my will — and that couldn't be done. He'd beat me until his arm gave out. But my will never gave out. And so he'd quit and curse. He was drinking heavily all the time. But we had this wonderful, great farm, and had plenty of everything.

"When I was fourteen he beat me one day. And that

evening I confided to my sisters I was going to Chicago. They schemed with me. We went to my father's bedroom where he was lying drunk, asleep. We rifled his pockets of all the money he had. The girls drove me to the station and I went to Toledo — to an aunt's, a sister of my mother (my mother was now away) who hated my father. She took me in for a day or two; and against her will I came on to Chicago. What do you suppose? In a year's time all the girls had left him. He couldn't get men to work. He had to sell the farm. And he did. He came to Chicago with \$80,000 and began to speculate, speculate and drink. He looked me up; and finally one day he came in a kind of drunken abandon and gave me \$2000, as if to say his money might be gone soon and he wished me to have this; or he wanted to make amends for his treatment of me. I took it and banked it. I was almost starving at the time, but I didn't touch a cent of it. And what do you suppose? In a few weeks he came to me for it — wanted the gift back; I gave it to him. He went away and I have never heard of him since."

"But how were you supporting yourself?" I asked. "Why, I went around to the newspaper offices and offered to write — about fires, accidents, scandal, anything. They looked at me and smiled — said, 'No, we have reporters.' But one day I met a man so big, so kindly. He was on one of the papers. And when I told him what I wished to do, he said, 'Write up something that happens in your observation, or that you know of intimately, and bring it to me.' I was fourteen and he was about thirty-seven. Well, a girl suicided in my boarding house. I wrote it up and took it to him. It pleased him and I was paid. And so I did this sort of thing for other papers and got along. And all the while I was living; but, Skeet, no man ever laid a hand upon me, kissed me, was familiar with me. I scared them all to death. Mr. Norris, this man who was first so kind to me, treated me quite like his sister; and when he changed toward me I was ready to become his wife, and

we were married. I was nineteen. He was now about forty-two and not well; and we began to travel. We traveled a few years — everywhere; we returned to settle down. He bought this farm, built this house. And here for five years he was invalided — and I cared for him.” Then Becky began to speak unconsciously of my work. “Have you been seeing those curious poems by Willis Aronkeil that are printed in the papers?”

A thrill shot through me. What was Becky going to say?

“No, I haven’t seen them.”

“You must, they are truly wonderful. Of course all poems treat of honor, love, friendship, the passions. But here is such a curious treatment of them, offering to the mind a new use of their beneficent forces. I can’t explain them quite.”

Ah me! To listen to such words from such lips! But I did not reveal myself as Willis Aronkeil. I laid my head back against the shoulder of the couch and exclaimed: “How sweet is life, how sweet!” “Oh, it is sweet, Skeet.” She leaned over and kissed me on the brow. “Who are you anyway?” she asked.

“I am the great god Pan,” I said, standing by the mantel and fashioning my locks into horns.

“You are the great god something.” A sudden excess of emotion seized me. I walked toward Becky and tried to take her in my arms. But she eluded me. What was this woodland being after all? I pressed her head to my breast, pushed back the hair from her brow, kissed her upon the eyes, the cheeks, the lips, clasped her hands in mine, encircled her lovely shoulders with my arms, and measured with them the richness of her unspoiled waist.

We sat breathing softly, trying to get our breathing into time with the cosmic diastole and systole. A wonderful peace filled us; all our vitality reduced to tranquil fires. “Skeet, do you ever pray?” Becky asked. “No, but I will pray with you.” “Let us pray together, Skeet — just to ourselves.”

We knelt together by the couch, our heads, buried in our arms, sunk in the pillows. After a silence I said, "What did you pray, Becky?"

And she said: "I prayed thus to the unknown Power: 'Lead me like a lost lamb in the path of love to my love.'"

"Oh, my dear, my dear — did you pray that?"

"What did you pray, Skeet?"

"I prayed: 'Give me genius, intuition to know and to live by the truth.'"

When I arose to go, for I was off to New York, Becky wished me to write a note for her to read after I was gone. I sat at her table and wrote. Something kept me within the boundaries of this expression:

"Becky, my dear: All of this is so wonderful and so beautiful that I am transported. It is like a lyric, a poem. You have honored me in every way, and I wish to honor you. I have come to you, not a wholly healed and free spirit, due to what I have suffered. But surely under the influence of your genius I could be put into possession of all my better powers. Write me while I am away. My address will be with Clarke & Co., Union Square. I am going to publish a book through them. May our prayers be answered. I shall think of you constantly and invoke the gods. And I shall see you as soon as I return.

"Tom."

I sealed the letter and handed it to Becky. The tears stood in her eyes. She said, "When I was a little girl I lost my pony. I cried my heart out. Everything I have cared for I have lost. My mother is away from me. I know what love is. I love her beyond all words; and I haven't her. My husband died. And I shall lose you."

"Lose me? How? No! You will not lose me." We stood facing each other holding hands. The tears coursed down my cheeks. But my time had come to go. One final look and I started from the room. Becky did not follow me into the hall. She said at last, "Look up Evelyn

in New York. Here's her address." She gave it to me. I paused momentarily at the head of the stairs. "Good-by," she called softly from the library. "Good-by," I called back. Leisurely, noiselessly I descended the stairs. I opened the door; walked into the fresh air of September; walked the graveled path to the iron gate; walked down the road to the cabin. Henry put my satchels into the Ford, and we drove to the village. And all of Becky receded from me like a dream.

CHAPTER LXIII

WHEN I arrived in Chicago, I went directly to see George Higgins, both to tell him of my good fortune about the book and to urge him to further efforts to free me from Alicia. He had offered her an alimony settlement of two hundred dollars a month. But Alicia and her lawyer refused the offer. I authorized George to increase the amount to two hundred and fifty dollars a month. I felt that I could not go on and achieve, with Alicia and my past with her clinging to me by a thread ever so slender. I told George about my life at the cabin, what I had done to heal and master myself — of everything except Becky. I was on the point of telling him when quite suddenly he said, "Have you met Mrs. Norris out there?"

"No; who is she?"

"Perhaps she's away. She is a good deal. She's the weirdest creature this side of Paradise. Beautiful and fascinating, a mystery to every one. Has no beaux that any one knows of. Makes friends of all sorts of people. Loves books and all that. And if your book goes, and you stay in the cabin, she will grab you for dinner and lionize you."

"She won't find me out, George. I'm going to publish under the name of Willis Aronkeil."

"Why?"

"Oh, just for fun — just to sit in hiding and watch the success, if the book is one."

"You're foolish. Why not get everything out of it there is in it? Why not let the Widow Norris grab you? Hell's delight! Why not marry her? She's worth about eight million, more or less. And you could give Alicia all you have and share in with the widow's income alone and have more than that. And then if your book goes, you could go on and write, travel about with the widow, and be a regular

kept, subsidized author. What better use can these widows make of their money than to give leisure to men of talent? There are no prizes for literary men in this country. There should be. Have sense, Skeet. There's your chance. I'll bet a million. And if you don't grab her, some other man will."

I listened to George without comment, save to ask him who Becky's husband was. "He was a newspaper man here, a Charley Norris. He inherited an enormous fortune from an uncle, his namesake. Only had it just before he married this girl, who was a newspaper girl here. I've met her. She was known as the Witch of Atlas. The boys used to talk about her — I mean just about her high temper, her independent ways, her mysterious ways. But no one ever said she wasn't a Diana. Some of the fellows went after her but failed. She was always straight, straight as Diana — but queer. If you come back to the cabin I'll come out — and we'll try to see the widow. I can manage it somehow. You're coming back?"

"Yes. But if it gets very cold, I may come into town for December and January. Perhaps not. I thrive there. I like it."

I caught an afternoon train and was in New York the next afternoon; but too late to see my man at Clarke & Co.'s I went to a hotel. No sooner did I enter the room than a terrible nostalgia came over me. I had been thinking of Becky constantly. Now it seemed if I could not see her immediately I should go mad. I was terrified. Had a great madness come upon me at last — upon me who had known the peace and the inspiration of Winifred; the sensual delights of Madame Lefevre and Julie Valentine; and the physical attachment of Alicia? What new, strange passion, enchantment was this? I lived over our sweet hours together, the moments of parting, her tears. Was my note, left for her to read after I had gone, tender enough, sufficiently honoring of all she had given me of her friendship? I was very lonely in this room. My heart sank with a

sickening feeling; a thousand speculations filled my mind. Was she what she seemed? Had she come to me from the devotion of her husband, and mingled its symphony with our symphony, freely, untouched of other chords? Was she interested in the books I loved of her own inspiration, unaffected by any knowledge that these were my books? Devils whispered these questions to me. In spirit I fled from their torture, their poisonous flames. No! I would put myself in communion with Becky; with Becky the child, the once devoted wife, the prankish girl, the majestic woman, the pure spirit living beautiful things, the exquisite soul! And I sat at a table in my room and wrote this note:

“Becky Darling: I have thought of nothing but you since I left you. Your kindness, your generosity, your fanciful spirit, your smiles, your happy laughter, your girlish chuckles, your tenderness, and above all the honor and the confidence bestowed upon me fill my imagination to overflowing. I love you. I do not say I have never loved before; nor can you. I can say with truth that the love I give you is all that I gave Winifred with something added to it; as if a theme in music had been expanded into a sonata; as if a picture begun had been finished; as if one saw the world through a window, and then walked forth and saw the whole sky and all the surrounding fields. Do you love me—do you? For if you do not, it will be very terrible for me. I have suffered much. And in order to go on, if you do not love me, I must forget you; or work this experience into something benign and beautiful. I can stand no more bitterness. Oh, my dear, save me from this—I beg of you. I want love, Becky. I want love, your love. And I will give you love heaped up for your love. Do write me and tell me. I am quite lonely here; quite depressed. I am so homesick for you—for the meadows and your lovely house—And yet, I must wait—a few days before seeing you. With all my heart,

“Tom.”

I sealed and sent this message. I dined. I retired. But I did not sleep. I fell into a dream in a few moments of restless slumber; I was at Becky's house. The hangings were down. All the furnishings were packed. Becky's trunks were in the hall, ready for the drayman. Nora was saying to me: "We've cleaned the house." I was following Becky about the rooms, begging her not to go. She was eluding me. She was going abroad. And I was to be left!

I awoke with a shudder. No! Here I was in my room in this hotel in New York. The clock in the Metropolitan Tower was chiming eight. I crawled from bed, fatigued and blurred, got into the bath, aroused my senses and my faculties with cold water, breakfasted and went forth upon my mission.

The matter of the contract for my book was soon settled; though I was asked not to use the pseudonym of Willis Aronkeil. I persisted in my wish about this, and had my way. The contract would be ready the next day for me to sign. I had nothing else on hand, and felt that I must fill in the time. I could do so by looking up Evelyn, Becky's friend. I called her on the telephone at her city house, and she came to tea. It was the merest chance that she was reached there; for she had not closed her summer home at Dobbs Ferry. She was as lovely to look at as Becky had described her. She was slender, exquisite, a flower. It was evident Becky had written her something about me. She soon made allusions to my log cabin. She, too, seemed to know the books I loved. Indeed she, too, had bought a copy of Plotinus and was carrying it home with her. "We are still at Dobbs Ferry. It was just a chance that you reached me in town. Can't you come out for overnight?" I told Evelyn about my engagement early the next morning to sign the contract. "Why, you can come in an hour from us." "I don't think I'd better. I want to get this off my mind — first anyway." "Very well, come up to-morrow afternoon. Get through here and come. We'll motor you to Harmon, where you can take your train West." I reflected a moment and consented.

"Well, how is Becky? — do tell me. She was here in the spring and early summer — but it was one of the times when we were not happy together." Then Evelyn began to speak in a jealous way of Becky.

"Well," I said, "the radii of your personalities conflict. The beams of your planetary selves tangle."

I studied Evelyn, taking in every word and remembering it. Seeing my eyes, my thoughtfulness, she added: "But Becky is lovely beyond words, generous, kind; only she must have her own way, and always be the center of attraction."

I thought I had an opportunity to find out something of Becky's admirers. I approached it this way: "Every one has faults; we can't throw people away for their faults; if we did, we should find ourselves stripped at last. I am beginning to take people for their virtues and accept their faults with resignation. There is so much in Becky to admire: her radiant personality, the real goodness of her heart, her interest in things of the mind. I like that way of hers of making friends with interesting men; her interest, too, in older women."

"Yes," said Evelyn, "but there is a reason for that. She quarrels with all the men who might be beaux or husbands or lovers. She is bound to dominate them. And no man of her age, or near her age, of marriageable age, will tolerate her caprices and her imperious ways. Now older men, not naturally interested in her romantically, treat her as a father would. They humor her, flatter her, tell her she is extraordinary and has talent. This keeps her in a glow — and so all is well. They do not compete with her in an equal relationship of interest and thought. And in your friendship with her you will have to master her completely; or you will have to submit to being mastered."

Evelyn filled me with fear. A vague regret came to me that I had sent the note to Becky, telling her of my love. But, surely, was not Evelyn jealous of Becky, or speaking out of some hurt?

On leaving Evelyn I went back to my room and wrote Becky as follows :

“Becky Darling : I have seen Evelyn — had tea with her this afternoon. She is lovely — quite devoted to you. I think you are over-sensitive. You must not persist in the thought that she ever failed you ; that these other women friends ever failed you. After all, how dreadful to catalogue people, as you called it : to stick pins through them and put them away like specimens of butterflies. I sign my contract in the morning. Then I’m going out to Dobbs Ferry at Evelyn’s for overnight and catch my train west at Harmon. I do hope I shall have a letter from you to-morrow. All my love is yours.

“Tom.”

CHAPTER LXIV

I WENT to Clarke & Co.'s the next morning, caring more for a letter from Becky than for the contract. But there was no letter. I signed the contract, and the whole day was before me. I looked up trains to Dobbs Ferry, determined to wait for the last mail before leaving the city. I wandered about from bookstore to bookstore. At half past four I went back to Clarke & Co.'s. The last mail had come; but I had no letter. Rather depressed, I went to the train.

Evelyn's summer home was a large stone house, old and patrician, set in a great yard of trees. Fall flowers were still blooming. I was greeted by Evelyn and by her husband. In the drawing-room I was introduced to Julian Danaher, a man of thirty-five, well set-up, faultlessly dressed, of self-possessed personality and manner. "A friend of Becky's," Evelyn said. He smiled in an uncommunicative way when Evelyn characterized him as a friend of Becky's. I was in a sense abashed. I was not dressed in fashion as he was. I was not the polished man he was. I was in this place of rich material living. A thousand tortures seized me. I could not be myself. I sat at the table almost silent while the others talked of people and events familiar to them; and of Becky too. But Danaher did not join in the theme of Becky. He sat eating his food delicately but with enjoyment, partaking of the wine with the manner of a connoisseur. What did it mean? Or did it mean anything?

Danaher went away after dinner. I felt relieved, emboldened at last to ask Evelyn about him. "He's a charming man," I said. "Who is he?" "A very wealthy broker," Evelyn said. "Becky could have married him; they

quarreled about something. He's the type I spoke of; the man near her own age who refuses to treat her as a child, to humor her, bow down to her, be dominated by her. He isn't the kind who reads."

Then Evelyn asked me about my train, in order to arrange to motor me to Harmon. No! I had to return to New York. I had been thinking. I must try once again for a letter from Becky. So I said: "After all, I must return to the city, and in time to catch the five o'clock Limited there. I didn't finish at Clarke & Co.'s. I'll take a local in about ten."

There were later drinks, and again with Evelyn's husband. We retired. The next morning at eleven I went to the city, took a taxi from the station to Clarke & Co.'s, and found two letters from Becky. The first one was written in response to the letter I had left on parting with her; the second to my first letter from New York.

"After you left, the house was as lonely as a deserted banquet hall. I stood it as long as I could before reading the note you left for me, as one starving might treasure food. Then I read it. Are you happy? Surely life touches the strings quite perfectly at times. Do be healed. Do not suffer. If I can help you—you know—you know. I hope you will do well with your book. But to resume, after reading your note I walked across the fields—the afternoon very beautiful, and I thought of many things. After all I am afraid of you—afraid you are cruel. And yet. . . . With all good wishes."

And the next letter read:

"I have fallen ten billion miles into space on reading your letter from New York—My eyes shoot out rays into space beyond Arcturus. I can't realize it. And in answer: How can I answer you? What is love? I loved once; but to love you—ah, that puzzles me. Yet I believe I do."

I read and re-read these letters. I was assured. Yes, it must be true; I had come to Becky. She had been searching for me. She had heard about me. She knew about my presence at the log cabin. She had spied me from the hill. She had disappointed me at tea, — but only to run into Chicago and find out more about me. Would this were true! It must be true. It was as probable as anything else unknown about her.

I loved to think these things. I could walk on the air in space, looking clearly and loftily upon life by thinking them. And why not think them and be all that was noble and vital in me to the fullest capacity? Would I ever again listen to words about Becky that seared me with doubt, with worldly-wise speculation? Never, I resolved; never again; from Evelyn nor from any one. I would return to Becky as fast as the train would carry me. And I kept saying to myself the words of her letter, "I do, I do, I do, I do." Becky loves me! Oh, sacred bliss! radiant flame rising above the red fires, the black smoke of lust and hate and care, envy, rivalry, anxiety, melancholy, all the black heats and fumes of life — radiant flame that purifies, exalts, makes vital and powerful, creative and abundant the stream of life. Becky loves me! I love Becky — yes, all other loves have mounted to this love; and all passions and all images of beauty have merged in Becky. I am happy, for I am saved. Life is now wholly sweet. My cup overflows. May the Fates not touch it to spill one drop of its precious nectar.

When I returned to Chicago, I saw George Higgins to urge a speedy settlement with Alicia, after which I went to my cabin and Becky, and found that Becky had a guest in the person of Constance Starrett. And George Higgins came out with me for a short visit.

CHAPTER LXV

CONSTANCE went her way. George returned to the city. I was reading proofs of my book. I was at peace again, with all external influences removed which disturbed my vision of Becky and broke upon the music of our communication. I was happy in my love. Was I indeed like Becky? Did I dislike those who liked her, even as she seemed to dislike George Higgins, and as Evelyn rankled at the friendship which grew up between Becky and the friends Evelyn introduced to her? Was this envy, that base passion which maddens and poisons?

Becky and I walked and read. I was much at her house. I told her one day of my book to be published under the name of Willis Aronkeil. She said, "I suspected these poems were yours. The sound of your voice is in them. They are the beautiful part of your nature, Skeet."

She was talking from time to time of going East, of going South. I could see a restlessness growing upon her. And yet she had great cares, which kept her disturbed in mind, vexations which stung her. I did all I could to relieve her, to help her.

I spoke to her at times of marriage, saying, "It must be, dear, it must." She made no definite reply to these words. But once again she said: "If our lives should come together, you could come here and share what I have. You should do handsomely by Alicia — as much as you can. It makes no difference to you; and she is a woman, whatever else she is. I am afraid you have been cruel to her. I sense strange things about her."

December descended at last. We walked in heavy coats, Becky in her sables. We read by her fire at night, feasting on apples. We drank miraculous wine from the same cup.

But in middle December a letter came from my father's doctor. He had suffered a collapse, was already in bed a number of weeks. He was now fifty-nine, had met his first break, after a lifetime of uninterrupted vigor. My father wished me to come to him. The doctor thought it would be wise. His whole situation was appealing. My mother and sister lived abroad. Davis was away. Father was sleeping alone at his house, taking his meals at restaurants. How life does bring us all to some dishonoring end!

I showed the doctor's letter to Becky and she urged me to go. And I was off, closing the cabin, telling Henry to be ready to come back to me when I should return.

I found my father broken, indeed. Great strands of white crossed the general background of his black hair. His face was yellow. His manner nervous and anxious. He was worried about his business; and I had to take his office and attend to the clients that called. Every day there was a letter from Becky. She had had guests from near-by towns that I didn't know. Her affairs vexed her. She was tired; not quite well; some days quite down. She was reading this book or the other book. But in these letters no reports of her thoughts, her speculation; no intelligence of moment conveyed, no love for me expressed. Were they letters? And once I thought if she wished to stress the things of the mind as the permanent things, and save love from the abyss of passion and the flesh, why not a communion in letters, in this absence forced upon me?

And at last she was getting ready to go to Florida with Constance. She would leave in a few days, in ten days at best. It was the first of January now. My father was still in bed. He was improving. The doctor thought he would be up in another month. I had to return to see Becky.

I turned over the office to a lawyer in Marshalltown who had been helping me. My father was satisfied with the arrangement. And I returned to Chicago, promising to come back and help with the will case. But now that was not to

be tried until May. For it had been passed to the May term of court on account of my father's illness.

I went directly to Becky's house. I did not reopen the cabin, or even let Henry know that I had returned. And in an instant all the meaningless letters that Becky had written me faded away in the light of her smile, in her glad cries. She was packed to leave. I had arrived just in time. She was off to-morrow. And so this visit should be our last, until she returned in March or April. I could not ask her not to go. It seemed selfish. Had I not been away from her these weeks? And she looked worn. She was visibly nervous and restless. "Is your father better?" she asked. "Yes." "I'm glad."

And now I was puzzled what to do. I had no daily business to occupy me, and the misfortune of that became plain. I had no home — none except the cabin. What should I do in Becky's absence, and where should I stay? "I am thinking," I said at last, "where I shall stay while you are gone." "Why, just where you would stay if I were here."

"Where is that, the cabin?" "Wherever you wish. For that matter you can stay here in my absence. Nora and the cook will be here right along. Read, write, be at home here."

"No, Becky."

"Why not?"

"Not with you gone out of the house. I should go mad. Everything would remind me of you; and I should go stark mad."

"What a strange boy you are! Well, then, go to George Higgins. Live with him again. The time will go by quickly; and I shall be back before you know it."

The night came on. Becky was adding dresses, trifles, to her already completed trunks. She seemed never to finish. Our converse was not wholly concentrated, but broken by her rising and leaving me, when she chanced to remember something yet to be done. I seemed to have many things to say that fled my mind in these interruptions.

Silences fell upon us. Becky yawned at times, then giggled apologies. "I am so tired. Then my train goes at noon. If you go back to Chicago you must not come on my train. Go earlier or later as you choose." "I'll see you off, help you to the last. There's a train about three o'clock. I'll take that."

With dinner and wine Becky became quite herself, vital and brilliant. She had dressed for the occasion; in purple silk this time, not wholly harmonious with her color. We read a little. Again the clock raced. It was midnight soon. And I said, "You have a hard morning ahead of you. You must get some sleep. And I must go to the cabin." So we said our good night and I departed.

CHAPTER LXVI

GEORGE took me in and was glad to have me. I occupied the time as best I could with study. All my proofs were read; my book would be out in March.

Becky telegraphed me upon arrival. And her letters began to come day by day. They were written in her own hand now; but she signed none of them. There was nothing but the address on the envelope to know to whom they were written. In my loneliness, in this separation, in the anxiety I felt for my father, and in the wearing annoyance I had because of Alicia I needed Becky's personality conveyed to me in all kinds of intimate thoughts and expressions. But nothing came from Becky. Her letters were never longer than one page of notepaper, and she wrote nothing except about her engagements of the day. One of them will suffice to illustrate her manner:

"I am better to-day — tired yesterday. Have been doing too much. Constance is always lovely to me; so kind; I love her. I am greatly admired here. If I were vain I should grow vainer. Dined last night with a Mrs. Green, whom I have met here. She had a duke to dinner who eyed me. It's lovely here; but sometimes I wish to be away from every one. All good wishes."

And if I quote one of my letters the difference between our capacities or inclination for expression will be shown. This is a letter which I didn't send. In a kind of shrinking from pouring myself out to Becky so fully, I laid this letter aside, intending to send it later, perhaps. But I never did.

"Becky Darling: Your letters come regularly day by

day and I wait for them with a beating heart. Sometimes the morning's mail does not bring one; and then I wait at the apartment into the afternoon. When it comes I am so reassured of your continued love. But one day when I did not hear from you, my heart sank. I dare not tell you how terrified I was, for fear you might be ill; or if not ill that something might have arisen to dampen your desire to write. My father remains quite ill. I have always loved him so greatly that this break of his hurts me poignantly. And I have other cares, with which I shall not inflict you. But you take the place of all persons and all loves. Only come to me; only stay, and never leave, and I shall be happy. If you prefer to survive me, I wish it to be so. As for me, I shall not care to live if you go. I have written you many long letters; and there is nothing to add about my daily life. Can I call it life with you away? One does not live when one waits for a day. All the intervening time is waste; and we destroy it as fast as possible. My days at the cabin haunt me with their beauty. And you come to me in my dreams, always with your lovely smile, and your musical voice. I am wholly yours.

“Devotedly,
“Skeet.”

And so the winter passed in sheer nothingness. I have no memory of it except that I wrote and received letters from Becky. I have a vague memory that it was during this time that George was saying to me occasionally that he would soon reach a settlement with Alicia. As much as I wished to be free of her, I did not fix my mind upon it now, or upon what he said about it when he spoke.

And suddenly, as it were a change upon a stage from winter to spring, the snow seemed to be going, the snow was gone. High up in the blue sky I saw white clouds, even when around me there was thin ice upon the streets and at the spouts. A robin sang one morning. And one morning a telegram came. Becky would arrive the next day!

Oh, she had quite kept her word. It was only the fifteenth of March. And she had said she might be gone until April. And now she was back; before the spring had come down. All my strength, exuberance, returned to me. I was restored in my thoughts. I was wholly myself now, with Becky drawing nearer me every minute. I sent Becky flowers to her hotel.

And the next day, giving Becky just time to be in her hotel from the train, I telephoned. Back came her voice, her vibrant laughter; but her voice was sweeter, fresher, than in the last days before she left. She invited me to luncheon at one o'clock. Some very interesting people would be present too. She had met them in the South. And I saw them at luncheon.

Becky seated me at her right. She seated Mr. Merrill opposite her, and Mrs. Merrill and the daughter at the other side. These were her new friends. What could Becky see in these people? I knew all about this editor. He was oleaginous and mediocre, venal, greedy of publicity, a hireling to bad causes; a spokesman for money chicaneries. What could Becky see in him? I had to sit there and listen to his platitudes, his obvious flatteries of Becky. And I saw Becky glow to his praise, and join with him in opinions which I loathed, and could not believe that she shared. Was all this true? Or did I envy any one who could win a moment of Becky's interest?

We rose and separated. Becky was going to the theater with two men friends, who had filled her room with flowers. They were there with mine.

But Becky said: "What do I care for them? Your flowers gave me the only delight." Still I was shut out. She was going to the theater with them. But the next day she was going to the village. "I shall leave on the noon train. Come out at four. Is your cabin ready to live in?"

"Yes."

"And you?"

"I am wild to leave the city."

"You are the same, Skeet. Very well, come out. It is nearly spring. It will be spring soon. Come out."

And I went. There was no change in Becky. "Why," I was about to ask, "did you not write me more intimately?" But I couldn't speak the words to Becky, standing before me radiant, so gentle, extending her hands to take mine, bending to kiss my hands. "Oh, my dear, you must not kiss my hands. I shall kiss yours—but you must not kiss mine." All was as it was before, the feasts, the long talks, the hours of sweet communion in talk and with books, the perfect accord, the song rising without a false note from our united hearts.

We walked by the river, gathering the first flowers; we rode over the country; we stood on hills to catch the full effect of the spring winds; we tramped the woodlands to watch the velvet pinkness of the oak leaves put forth, and the mandragora spring out of fallen leaves; and the Indian turnip sprout; and unnamed blossoms of blue and red and purple come forth in meadows, on hillsides. Once when we happened to be standing by the cabin, having emerged from the woods, I looked up at my hill. The clouds were sailing over its rim. Spears of dead grass from last year stuck against the lunette; and clouds were skimming in the void above the hill line. "Look, Becky," I said, "look at the hill. Do you get a strange feeling from that, as if there was a magical country over behind the hill; as if all the fairy lore of childhood was real, beyond there somewhere?" "Yes, yes," said Becky, her eyes leaping with light. "Oh, Becky," and I folded her to me, "something mystical has united us. I find all things through you, my best and highest self, my greatest powers. Dear! kill me if you wish—but do not leave me—do not torture me."

"How strange you are, Skeet! I have never seen any one like you. You are so imaginative, even exacting, friendship can give no more; you must not talk to me so, for my nature demands freedom. . . . You are a mystic and you reach out for raptures and solaces and blisses beyond

the world. You reach for them through me. And I am only a woman, a creature of flesh and blood, an unsubstantial thing like a bubble, and in that sense a bubble. Oh, Skeet, you terrify me — be careful — be careful, I beg of you.”

And so the days passed. My book had come out. I took the first copy to Becky. She bent and kissed it and put it away in her most secret drawer.

I was in and out of Chicago every few days, staying only between trains, always returning to Becky for the evening. We were living the spring together. Its drops were precious as blood, and could not be wasted. This spring was the Holy Grail of our spirits. Blanche fleur, Alicia was passing from my life, to go out of it entirely. I was progressing with Becky into the land of soul triumph; into the illumination of cosmic splendors!

On these visits to Chicago I was seeing George, who was working day by day with Alicia's lawyer. Either there was much to do, or George was dawdling with the matter, or Alicia was playing a game for more money. One thing was true; my mind was not on this business. I left everything to George. I kept my thoughts free and untainted as far as possible for Becky. One day I went in town to have Becky's will typed which I had drawn for her. There were blank lines here and there in it, which she had left for her own writing, to insert the names of beneficiaries and the amounts of bequests. I went to my old office to have this done, not wishing George to know about it. I took the typed document back to Becky. She filled in what she wished; we called up Nora and the cook for witnesses. She executed it and put it away. "If I die, you will see what I have done for you," Becky said. "Oh, my dear, you make me ashamed. I want nothing. If you should go, I want to go too. I cannot live without you."

The will colored other things with the hues of finalities. Rooms at times were being cleaned, or slightly rearranged. Pictures disappeared, or were hanging in different places.

The cook was going away for a week or two. All these little things took on a mysterious meaning.

April had been wholly wonderful, with sunlight on the river and on the hill, with racing clouds, and with the songs of robins and meadow larks. Becky's yard and flower garden put forth. We watched its unfolding day by day from the windows. But May came in with rains. We were much shut in, and thrown back to books and to talk of sober things, and in winter moods.

My father had rallied and was up, but not strong, yet determined to go ahead. He was coming to Chicago to get the testimony of witnesses in his will case. He could not do the necessary running around, was not strong enough; would I come in town and go out and get these witnesses, and bring them to him? Would I get him a stenographer? Could he work in my old office? I explained all these things to Becky and she said: "You must go, Skeet, you must. It is an opportune time. It rains and rains. It is cold, too. And by the time you are through, the rain may be over — the spring may have re-descended, and we can go on and have it together."

I went in and helped my father. Becky wrote me every day as before. In the inspiration of her thought I served my father successfully; got all the witnesses, saw him through and sent him off as happy as he could be in the desolation and illness that had befallen his life. I had been away from Becky a week. And all the time it had rained. When I got to the village, the rain was falling in torrents; a winter coldness in the air vaporized my breath. I had to hire a taxi to get out to Becky's. I was damp and cold when I arrived. Becky brought me a drink of brandy. She piled fresh logs on the hearth. Ah, I was home again!

But I thought I saw objects in the hall as I had come up. What were they? I was kept teased to return and investigate. I did at last. The objects were Becky's trunks. She was packed. She was packing. She was going away!

CHAPTER LXVII

I WALKED rapidly back into the room.

"Where are you going, dear?"

"To New York."

"To New York, and without letting me know?"

"No, here is a letter I was just going to mail you. You can read it here."

She handed me an envelope addressed and stamped. I opened it and read:

"I want to wait until you return if I can. But Constance wants me to come to New York for about a week and I think I'll go. If you can't come back, and I do wish you to help your father all you can, then let me know; and I shall write you what day I'll be in so that we can say good-by. All good wishes."

I looked at Becky in silence. I looked out of the window at the fox-eared leaves on the maples. "Look at the leaves, Becky. They are out. In two or three days of warm sun they will unfold, and here you are going away. Please don't. We must have this spring together. We must live life to the full, for life is fleeting; we must love with full hearts, for hearts must die."

Becky began to giggle. Then she laughed. "What a boy," she exclaimed. "Why, it's only the seventh of May. I won't go until we have a good visit together. I'll be gone about a week. We'll have some of May left after I return, and all of June, the loveliest month of all. Look at you — you've been gone a week."

"I had to be."

"I have to be. I can't just stay here day in and day out. Here I've been here all this week howling like a lioness. What do you think I am, a canary in a cage? Is it love to be caged, to wait, to do nothing but be in one place? That kind of love is slavery. You should wish me to enjoy myself; to go about, see my friends, recreate, so that I can give you more and more richness of myself. And you'll find, Skeet, that to keep me you must give me freedom. You will lose me by enslaving me."

Becky drove all my fears away. Under her spell I saw the matter as she portrayed it. Yes, a few days do not matter. We shall have some of May and all of June together. Besides, whether I could help it or not, I had been away a week. I had already done what she was going to do. Our reasons were different, but the results identical.

I really had no arguments except those of selfishness, of arbitrary will. And these became petty in the view that she would soon be back, that we should really have some of May and all of June together, in spite of all.

And now our visit began. We had winter within with the blazing logs and the reading of books. Without, there was spring, the opening of little leaves against the window frame; the glow of tulips beside the walks; the delicate glory of opening forsythia. No note of discord came into our song. And I remembered and said to Becky, "Do you realize, dear, that we have never uttered a word to each other that was not a note in this lyric love — do you?" And Becky nodded her head, "Yes, Skeet, it is true."

Our last evening together deepened into tragedy. The rain beat upon the panes. The lightning flashed. Tears from Becky's eyes wet my cheeks. We stifled our sobs with self-control, with pressures of our mouths upon each other's faces. Why did we break in this way? Becky had never shed tears but once before. And now — but the rain beat, the wind sang at the crevices, and the darkness without was the darkness into which the soul departs on its long journey. We mastered ourselves and talked in whispers of

many things; our happy days, our harmonious love — yes, and the future. For again I said: "It must be, dear. You must be my wife." . . . What was in her heart — in the wandering imagination of this elfin woman? . . . Becky was as silent as a thrush amid dripping leaves. She only pressed my hands, or kissed me softly upon the throat. At last I went to my cabin.

I awoke to a bright day. Spring had returned! And on this day of Becky's departure! I arose and went to Becky's house. She was already astir. She opened to me. Her face, her hair, were a blaze of glory in the light of morning. She was smiling. She chuckled at my attempt at something gay. And we breakfasted together. The clock raced. It was nearly time for her to go. She was restless, nervous, going here and there, half self-absorbed. I said at last: "Becky, I am going to be freed of Alicia — perhaps while you are away. I ask you to be my wife. Engage yourself to me. Give me that happiness, that peace. Let me send you something to wear as a token that we are betrothed."

But at that moment Nora entered. The car for the train was at the door. The trunks were being carried out. "Good-by," said Becky, extending her hand. Nora went out. Becky kissed me good-by and said, "Stay here for luncheon if you wish." Then she left.

I stood at the window, waiting for her to appear in the walk below. Soon she came in view. She was so little, but so compact, so steady, so full of power and will. She didn't look up or back. She entered the car. She didn't glance at the window where I was standing. She was tucking herself under rugs, directing the chauffeur, smiling. The car started. She was gone!

I turned into the room. The clock struck twelve. Its echoes sang over the ceiling, around the corners. Becky's shawl lay upon the couch. A book face down, which she had left off reading, was on the table. The house was still as a grave. I walked to the table and poured a glass of brandy.

It revived me, awoke something resisting, half cynical in me. I left the house and walked to the spot by the river where I had first stood with Becky. It was madness to do this. I felt it at once and fled. I went to the cabin. Henry was cleaning the car. "Take me to the station," I said. "I must catch the one o'clock." A sense of futility filled me for all things. And now quickly the sun grew warmer. Balmy breezes blew over the hill. A meadow lark sang somewhere in the azure above me. The river glittered. Cattle in the fields scampered. And Henry was whistling. It was spring!

And it was summer before I heard from Becky again! At last I ceased to write her, after sending a letter in which there was a tone of bitterness. Ah! Becky was poisoning me, not as Alicia did, but with a poison of her own. I could not analyze it, but I felt the deadly effects of the serum. I began to long for freedom from Becky.

CHAPTER LXVIII

It was July. The city sweltered under the withering heat. The sky was purple, like the edge of a deadly inflammation. Drafts of torrid air hot as from flames sucked through the streets running east and west. Men dropped at their work. Horses fell in the harness. The lake was still as a pond. But I was well, and living safely in the dangerous days. I was well, but with a dull ache at my heart, like the ache of a malignant growth. There was no word from Becky.

Dr. Starrett and Virgil Reese from Marshalltown had spent a few days with me. Mrs. Huntley Moore had written me a letter from abroad. I had run across Lillian McFee, who told me of the death of Billy Phelan. In various ways the past days were coming up before me to receive their endings and burial. Through George I had met Katherine Pryor; and we had become friends. There was some solace in her companionship. And life went on.

But in early July my father died. It was sudden — the invisible hammer, so dishonoring to his courage, his life. I went to Marshalltown. I was the only member of the family present. Myrtle and my mother were still in Italy. Davis was in California. I sat in the old home and heard the minister go through a meaningless rhetoric. I saw the earth heaped upon the coffin. I had read the resolution that the committee of the bar association had prepared for adoption. I came back to Chicago. Surely now I was beginning to see all things through the last lengthened section of the telescope. My father's picture and a brief sketch of his career were published in the Chicago press. Surely Becky saw this. But no word from Becky. . . .

My cup of sorrow and loneliness was full. But no word from Becky!

I went out to the cabin at last for relief from the terrors of the city. I was writing to Bob Hayden and to George, hinting of my loneliness. As for Alicia that was ended at last. She took \$70,000 from my \$80,000. Cavette Errant was her lawyer! I did not care, and whether I should ever marry again, Becky or another, cut no figure in the end of this marriage. I was numbed and bewildered. I didn't write Becky that I was free. The press had some notice of it. I thought that if she saw that, very good, and if not no matter. I was not writing to her. I could not. She was brooding or living, dreaming in other spheres than those we had known together. I could not be out of her thought; but I seemed to be detached from her plans, her hopes.

At last, July 10th, a letter came from Becky dated from Maine. And this was what she wrote:

"My dear Friend: Explanations are idle, for they don't explain; and yet I shall do my best. Consider first if I have withheld anything from you that was my duty to give, and if I have not given you friendship, and as you have said happiness too. Well, you have given me these things — and I thank the God that brought you to the cabin and let me know something of you. All this in spite of your bitter letter and my fear of you. But if I haven't written, then what? You may have been pained; so have I been pained not to write, and the score is even. I couldn't. I have been clarifying my mind; and if we had written each other I should have blurred my vision. Now it is clear. I think I see you — know you. With all your charms, your winning ways you are cruel and selfish, self-contained. Your life has made you so in part; and your marriage. And frankly I do not like your attitude toward Alicia. I am sure, too, that no marriage is ever dissolved. Something of it clings to one forever — and in that connection I have only loved but one — my Charley. I cannot love you without the

memory of that love; and on your part you cannot rid yourself of what your marriage has done to you. And I have kept away and thought until I have reached these clear conclusions. I suffer too, though I don't wail much about it. I suffer knowing that you do and I suffer because of your disappointing me both on the score of what you are by nature, and because of your life before knowing me. You would try to dominate me, and that can't be, for I am a wild creature. You are cruel too. I can see it in your eyes. And you would hurt me always. You think it strange after all our visits together that I say these things. Well, was I not often silent? — and besides you have a gentle, a charming side, a real goodness in you which I evoke at my best — and so I have waited till now to speak. But you must not think you are wronged. Life gives us certain hours of happiness, and then takes them. You have had yours — and be thankful. And I am so glad that you and I never stepped over the boundary that divides ecstasy from complete dedication. That never could be with me anyway; and you will be happier in time to come that this was so.

“Believe it or not, there is such a thing as friendship in this world. I am your friend — and forever; and I can be that if I am not close to you so that your qualities excite what is hostile in you in me. To be a friend means that I am in this world with you; and that you can come to me, if need be and find me loyal to your necessities and happy to serve you. Now I write all this to put quite out of your mind any serious plan on your part touching me. When I come back if you are there, we shall not mind each other — but shall we seek each other? My life ahead seems as it has been, one of isolation, and fluttering about. I confess to you that I am a moth, a strange, restless creature, seeking peace, seeking happiness, and finding them only to lose them. I do not say good-by — but adieu and with fondest wishes for your peace.

“Becky.”

In the old days this letter would have filled me with fierce resentment; I should have punished Becky, persuading myself that she had led me along only to wound my hands. But I sat down to reason with myself. Before I met her I had parted from Alicia; to be free from Alicia I had given up my fortune; but not at the instance of Becky, not upon the basis of any promise of hers to marry me. Becky had plans; but that was her right. She saw certain impossible traits in me and that was her vision. Yes, my time had come to be clear in mind, and just in judgment; and if I was these things I could keep the beauty, the purity, the angelic sweetness of Becky as a memorial possession for life; or on the other hand I could resent Becky's letter, analyze it, suspect its motive, find cynical reasons for its being written. As Mephistopheles did, I could blast the beauty of the world by so treating Becky's letter, or I could preserve that beauty by rising to the heights of my soul. The time had come, so it seemed to me, I being now thirty-three, to find the best that was of my nature and to live it. I had sinned over and over against my better nature, my spiritual heritage. That matter of Martha Fisk, the ring and Alicia all had! I felt the Furies about me. And in these generous and self-appraising emotions I wrote to Becky:

"Dear Becky: I have fought a hard fight with myself and this letter is the result. First your decision cannot be questioned, as you have the right to make it. And second your reasons for it are accepted as you give them. I find much truth in what you say; and when I differ from you it is with deference. I bless life that has let me see a nature as wonderful as yours, so elfin, fanciful, gay, kindly, various, so essentially fine. And if I am cruel, and selfish, nevertheless do you not remember that I always honored you in the most scrupulous way, and took your hand and your lips as I would those of an angel? We have nothing to remember that will breed regret for anything of this sort. To quote myself I leave you with the cool hepaticas around the snows

of spring. I too am your friend — and may the gods bless you.”
“Tom.”

I walked into the village to mail this letter; and as I returned I wondered if I had done the sensible thing. Ah! this double nature of mine; this two-compartment mind; this idealistic and this Satanic reaction to events — this heaven and hell of me. Had not Becky fooled me? flown me? left me? Yes, but why not? Who has the right to success, can bargain for it, and get it? And so I thought.

THE MASON COUNTY HILLS

CHAPTER LXIX

BUT as I walked toward the cabin in a kind of oblivion of my surroundings, I etched out of the haze of an agony which permeated my whole being two definite figures of pain. One was that Becky did not appreciate my devotion, somehow she did not return my tenderness; the other was that I had desired her so much, but I felt now as Goethe did with Lilli, that I must master myself. On my part here was a serious and reasoned setting of a human being under lights that revealed her as she was to me. Becky had shown me herself; elfin and angelic, but not for me.

My mind was so concentrated on these thoughts that I was not conscious of my steps or direction. I went to the cabin in mechanical pursuit of that destination. Suddenly I was by the door, and in a manner I came to myself.

The door was open, but the cabin was empty. Evidently, however, some one had been here besides Henry. By a box, used for a seat, there was the last copy of the *Nation*; fresh cigar stubs were scattered about the ground. I had visitors, or had had them. I looked into the cabin again for evidence of my guests, if I had any. I could see nothing. I sat down on the box and picked up the *Nation*, looking it through with relaxed fingers and attention.

The leading article was a discussion of the Morocco crisis. What would come of the fact that the French had landed an army at Fez, to back one of the rival contestants for the crown? What would come of the fact that the German emperor had sent the warship *Panther* to Agadir, which had compelled the French to cede to Germany portions of her possessions in Africa, in exchange for Germany's consent that France establish a protectorate over Morocco? And Eng-

land had supported France against Germany, because England could not suffer Germany to secure a foothold on northern Africa opposite Gibraltar. Gibraltar! England's Gibraltar! acquired in the treaties of Utrecht and Rastadt, which left the grandson of Louis XIV on the throne of Spain; but on condition that France and Spain should never unite under one crown! I began to think back into history. This episode of Morocco in the month of June, 1911, now just past, was linked up with events stretching back to the Middle Ages; yes, and into the remotest period of written history. How should I, a puny individual, determined by my own nature, by circumstances, expect to escape from anything that had befallen me from the days of Winifred to this day of Becky Norris; and from the time of my prize essay to this little triumph to-day of "Willis Aronkeil"?

I thought of Chicago. The City! the tomb of the millions that are gone. Their houses here, closed or made over, rented or abandoned, bought by fresh triers of the game — but they are gone! They lie mouldy or decayed, or sunk to pitiful bits of bone; their skulls look straight up at the sky they searched in life. And looking with hollow eyes through six feet of earth, they know the sky as well as they ever knew it, when walking the boulevards! The City! This arena where gladiators fight, where souls are martyred, where the audience hisses, applauds, is cruel and obscene, asks for blood, hoots at failure, cries for the downfall of the strong and the destruction of the weak. This arena where jackals skulk at night and lions sleep in cages by day, scenting the blood of to-morrow. The City! This stage of fools and dreamers, madmen and idealists, thieves big and little, wantons, lechers, treasure hunters, imitators, clowns, tragic fools sunk in the delusion of infatuated sincerity and the sorcery of ever alluring hope. The City! This stage on to which I had been sent without knowledge of what it was, without wishing to go, without knowing my lines or my part; ignorant of the other players. This stage where

I had acted my little part, and from which I had bowed myself away before an inscrutable fate or impulse, only to find soul defeat with Becky Norris!

I was roused from my thinking, my daydream, by voices. Some one was coming up the bank from the river. In a moment I saw four men. They were George Higgins, Bob Hayden, Brose Horne, followed by Henry North as faithful attendant, who was shaking his head and laughing in humorous astonishment at the waggeries and sesquipedalian words of Bob Hayden.

"Well, Skeeters," said Bob, "we've come out to visit you! It is not meant that man should live alone — not saying that Henry here is not a good chum. But he says you don't hunt with him much. He gives me to understand that you chew various cuds of reflection; that you lucubrate ominously by day and night. And I can't make out whether you're searching for the Holy Grail or the Holy Bottle. If the latter, we've brought it to you — two cases of beer for this night, and most palatable food, to be culinarily by said Henry North and eke by Friar John, which is to say myself; and by one George Higgins, yclept Leopardi the second. By the rood! aroynt and beshrew me, but we have had a most excellent lustration, as well as swim, dive, wade, buffet-the-waves, in the river yonder. And Henry, if you will, prithee, open a bottle of the maddened and trampled spelt, malt, hops, I'll proceed to libate while I clothe myself again."

Henry shook his head and laughed in wonder and delight. They came to me, George, Bob and Brose, and took me by the hand. Bob went on: "Get out your banjo, Brose, and sing us the 'Great Glaciation.' Fall, world with all your insane and warring nations under the refreshing and preserving advance of the grand tip-up and the great slide of accumulated icebergs and snow! Heigh-ho!"

I smiled at this raillery but could not warm to it. They went in the cabin. And such an exchange of ribaldry between George and Bob! In a few minutes Brose Horne

was plucking at his banjo. Bob was doing a jig. Henry was going in and out of the kitchen, shaking his head and laughing. And George, who intellectualized the orgy, pointed its humor with sardonic wit. What were my feelings for Becky, or anything else in the midst of such a medley of roaring irony as this?

When they were dressed they came to the front of the cabin, where I had remained for the most part, took seats and began to open beer. There were calls for Brose Horne's "Great Glaciation." He tuned his banjo and began to sing:

"Said the Devil to Belial, Zamiel, Beelzebub,
Go look into the tub,
Go look into the tub;
Don't let me tell you twice, now wouldn't it be nice
If we got out of ice?
When all we have to get it is to lean against the hub
Of the old world, round world, spinning on the poles,
Like a hand organ whirling with a lot of idiots' souls.
When all we have to get it is to push her, tip her
And let old Greenland empty like a dipper
On North Americée! down to Africee
Over Chinee,
Europe and the Indies sweltering for the price
Of a little handy ice.
And the people, the people, the giasticutus,
Caesar and Napoleon, Antony and Brutus
Will lie under ice all the way down to Borneo
From Lapland and Finland to Terra del Fuego.
It's the great glaciation
That overtakes the nation,
The city and the kingdom and the clan.
It's the great glaciation
That stills the tribulation,
It's the great panacea for man.
Oh won't it be cold! Oh, won't it be cold!
Up there in paradise won't it be cold!
For the feet of the angels on the streets of gold?
The only warm place will be hell, that's clear —
And we'll have ice for a hundred thousand year —

It's the great glaciation for us" — etc. —

And so it went. Brose Horne's expression was a mixture of an Airedale's and a Punchinello's. What was the great glaciation to him? He plucked the banjo, not in rejoicing for the great catastrophe, but as if it could not be, or as if, should it be, there would be men or gods to stay it. But George grinned from ear to ear. He patted his feet, his hands. He seemed to be thrilled with the prospect of a cataclysm that would pay off the score of an idiot world that should never have been created. And I—I could not rid my mind of thoughts of Becky. For the world might be destroyed—yet here in the world men and women had found love for each other and through love had sensed meaning beyond the world. I was studying the face of Bob Hayden. His great eyes glowed like furnaces. He did not withhold himself from this riot of buffoonery, he studied it as an exhibition of abandoned mirth, reckless hilarity. He smiled upon it; and he pointed it with interjections of aptest wit.

During this riot of satire, Henry was going in and out preparing the evening meal. It was ready at last, and we dined. George repeated some of his most scandalous parodies; he delivered himself of his extremest blasphemies. Henry stood as if frozen to the floor, expecting to see George withered up in sudden lightning.

After supper Brose Horne began to pluck the banjo again, but more quietly, with longer rests, as Bob Hayden warmed into a monologue on the episode of the *Panther* sent as a warning to Morocco and the Powers.

"A catastrophe impends," he said, "which will make the French Revolution look like a riot in Halstead Street; and yet it will be the culmination of the French Revolution, and in a sense of the English revolution of 1688. You see the French Revolution proclaimed the principle of popular sovereignty, and of nationality; and it tried to set up nations, autonomous and ruled by the people. But gee! it always happens the same way. Look at any epoch seeking to express an idea, a human aspiration. It almost does so,

sometimes, and then bing-go! The thing fails, or only partly succeeds, and it's in a later age that what has failed is accepted as a truism and is embodied in law. Yes, after the French Revolution you have Metternich and the divine right of kings, and you have England fighting off the ideas of the French Revolution, and you have Prussia humiliated and building up for a fight, and of course you have Napoleon who plays emperor and does a lot of harm, but is essentially a lackey in the more or less unconscious service of democracy. Prussia and Austria, these are the two who have repudiated the liberalism of the revolution; that is, they keep an autocracy. They have parliamentary and civil reform, but under an autocracy. Prussia has Bismark, who crushes Austria and then crushes France; and the president of the German federation becomes the German emperor; and then you have the present emperor William II, who reads his Bible and says with Charles I of England that God gives the crown, and that the Lord has descended upon him to make him ruler. Well! all right now. What have you got? You've got a German empire full of beef and beer, lusty and bellicose, with professors teaching war and conquest and supremacy. And of course here's England who can't allow any one to lord it over her, and who is clearly restive as William builds up a rival navy. And you have the Berlin-to-Bagdad railroad which threatens England in India, and in Persia, which she and Russia have conquered. And there's Egypt and Turkey, both lands ravaged and tossed about since the days of Rome. And then there's France in an alliance with Russia; and northern Africa under the suzerainty of France; and England's Gibraltar across the way. And all the while Germany is expanding. She wants more room, she wants trade. She wants prestige. And she's tangled between Russia and France. And England sits secure in her island supremacy, but is ready at a moment to pounce on any one who interferes with her spoils. She's already in league with France; for France has given England a free hand in Egypt for a free hand in Morocco. England had her

navy ready last month when William sent the *Panther* to Fez. And then there's the Balkans, the Bosnian crisis of three years ago, in which Serbia got worsted because William stood with Austria and would have it so. And in fact, though this Moroccan matter has passed without war — war is going to come. And when it does, look out. Look at Russia licked by the Japs, crowded off the Asiatic ports; look at Russia bottled up on her own territory. Look at Turkey; the Balkans. Look at France now nourishing hatred for the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. But look at Germany growing stronger and more warlike; and look at England with her great possessions and trade, none of which she will surrender or suffer to be menaced. Yes, you'll see a war; and it will be the next thing to Brose Horne's glaciation.

"I don't want war — but what have I got to say about it? I've only lived 49 years, and the makings of a war come down almost from the days of Constantine. I've had nothing to do with it. But war or no war, you'll see that civilization will step forward with a war. Hunger and ideas make war; and hunger must be appeased; ideas must be victorious, or put to rest for good. Take the divine right of kings idea. Charles I founded himself upon Ecclesiastes: 'Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him what doest thou?' That's in the Bible. No matter; that idea had to die. It is dead now, except for Germany; and the advance of the world will kill it. Take the papal supremacy of the popes in temporal affairs. That was founded on the Bible too — on a verse in first Corinthians: 'But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man!' And Jeremiah: 'See I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out and put down and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant.' An idea! A few words, in the Bible or out of the mouth of this German Treitschke, and you have years of bloodshed and suffering, until they are rooted out or established. It cost a million lives to inter-

pret our own Constitution: did the states have the right to withdraw from it as a compact? So it goes.

"Now look at the cruelty and the tragedy of history. There's the holy sepulcher in the hands of the Moslem. It must be taken from the Infidel. Heigh-ho! The Crusades! — 300,000 men under Robert of Normandy and Tancred take Jerusalem, and in Solomon's porch and in his temple the Christian knights ride in the blood of the Saracens up to the knees of their horses. The children's Crusade. Oh, think of them! 30,000 French children at Marseilles on the way to the sepulcher of Jesus, expecting to see the Mediterranean open, so that they can walk on dry land to Jerusalem! But the sea rolls on. Merchants pick them up and sell them as slaves in Alexandria and Mohammedan cities. Look at the Hundred Years' War! Look at the Black Death which carried off 25,000,000 human beings. Look at the hundred years of religious wars — ideas in conflict and sharpening the sword, which cost the world 18,000,000 lives. Look at the Duke of Alva, who put to death 18,000 under the reign of the Inquisition. Yes, look at Christian and Protestant Cromwell, who massacred the garrison at Drogheda; and the French Revolution which turned on its own and destroyed them. Go back of all this — look at the fall of Babylon, the burning of Athens, the destruction of Carthage, the taking of Rome; look at Alexander, Attila, Jenghiz Khan — what a riot of wars, blood and death, fire, plague, reckless hate, blind lust. Yes, but in spite of it all Columbus discovers America, printing is invented, the steam engine, the power loom, the spinning jenny, and the world rolls up and on. Now there is something that is a consummation, an urge, an increase, a growth, but always a mystery. It is civilization; you can see it growing brighter and richer right through the ages. It is a lighthouse that sends its beams farther and farther into the darkness of ignorance and misery. And every man, unless he declines the task, becomes an animal, is bound to carry oil to the lamp or help trim the wick."

This was the substance of Bob Hayden's talk. It lasted till daylight. Brose Horne plucked quietly at his banjo, and listened, but with a look like that of the Airedale, nestling at our feet. What was all this to Brose Horne? But George Higgins grew serious; he was enthralled. As for me, I got a new vision of life. I had been feeling for some time that my psychic powers were growing stronger. I had been foretelling the receipt of letters; knowing the approach of people before they came before my eyes, prophesying little events; and now I could see the probability of Bob's forecast of war; and I sensed in this contemplation of history a Power that moves through the world, in whose being men are as the cells of their own bodies.

And from this peak of vision I could see Becky and myself. What were her faults, what any words she had inflicted upon me? They were nothing. For in spite of all, my love of her seemed a kindred thing to this force for civilization, persisting in spite of despotism and inquisitions, madness and errors and greed. Yes, I loved Becky, whether she was for me or not, whether I should see her no more, or unite my life with hers. I loved her; and I was ashamed of any thought I had ever had that denied my love, or any word I had uttered, or act that I had done that dishonored it or wounded it. I loved Becky; and under the influence of that love and the vision of life of Bob Hayden I was at peace, even if in sorrow. For I had sorrow. I could see clearly that Becky was not for me; that she would trammel the freedom of my spirit, and disturb my individual vision of life.

It was daylight—it was sunlight. The July air was warm, but refreshing; for a rain had moderated the recent heat. Henry started the fire for breakfast. But George Higgins said: "A morning dip." All of us went to the river and plunged in. All of us swam the river and back. Then we ran, laughing and dripping, to the cabin.

As I passed through the room I saw my naked body in the full-length mirror in the living room. I stopped to look at

myself. The others went to their rooms to rub down and to dress. I looked at myself — and with pride. I had come to self-consciousness. For the first time I knew my form, myself. I weighed 170 pounds — no fat. I was 5 feet 11 inches tall. I was full chested, pink, superbly muscled. I was shapely. I had never had a serious illness, an infection. My blood was rich and pure. I was young, just 33. A great happiness came over me, thinking of my power, the years ahead of me, the work I could do, as a trimmer of the wick, a carrier of oil to the lamp. I stood before the mirror and began to repeat these lines from "Faust":

"Below the hills a marshy plain
 Infects what I so long have been retrieving;
 This stagnant pool likewise to drain
 Were now my latest and my best achieving.
 To many millions let me furnish soil
 Though not secure, yet free to active toil.
 Yes, to this thought I hold with firm persistence,
 The last result of wisdom stamps it true,
 He only earns his freedom and existence
 Who daily conquers them anew.
 Thus here by danger girt shall glide away
 Of childhood, manhood, age, the vigorous day,
 And such a throng I fain would see
 Stand on free soil among a people free!"

Bob Hayden stuck his enormous head from the door, all tumbled riotously with uncombed hair. "Say, Skeet," he said, "why spoil lines like that with a translation?"

"Ja! diesem Sinne bin ich gang ergeben
 Das ist der Weisheit letzter Schluss:
 Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben
 Der täglich sie erobern muss.
 Und so verbringt umrungen von Gefahr.
 Hier Kindheit, Mann und Greis sein tüchtig Jahr.
 Solch ein Gewimmel müsch ich sehn
 Auf freiem Grund mit freiem Volke stehn.
 Im Vorgefühl von solchem hohen Glück
 Geniess ich jets den höchstem Augenblick."

“There, sir — Skeeters Kirby — no mortal hand has written finer words — greater truths — and they’re for you — for me, for every one who wants to help in this world.”

And then we breakfasted; and continued the talk of the night.

CHAPTER LXX

ALL day the talk went on, punctuated by the undisturbing strings of the banjo which Brose Horne was listlessly plucking. What had these men come to my cabin for? Was this the inspiration of Bob Hayden, divining my grief and my perplexity, resolving to aid me? I thought back through my life. How many had helped me along the way: Suevie Ross, "Grinner" Newton, Dr. Starrett, Virgil Reese, Mrs. Huntley Moore, Winifred! Yes, and I had profited through those who stayed me, or tripped me. They had been beneficent influences in part; for the rest I had grown stronger in overcoming the difficulties they had placed in my way. I began to wonder if I had not been chiefly at fault in all the dissensions in friendship, the cessation of relationships along my way. If so I was deeply sorry.

If I could only feel now that I had been of use to every one whom my life had touched; that I had given them a lift, some delight, some strength for the task of living. My heart overflowed with penitence, with aspiration to rise above all that I had been into a more tranquil and illumined realm. I wanted to earn my freedom and existence by daily conquering them anew.

And while I was in these thoughts Brose Horne began to play "The Swan" of Saint-Saëns very gently, for Bob Hayden had now come to a disquisition upon Jesus. He was saying that perhaps the Power, the gods, give to men a great genius in order that they may build by him; even as men furnish to bees the frames around which the bees make their combs and into which they store their honey. And if there is nothing to Jesus but this direction and guide in the world's architecture, how wonderful anyway it is! "Yes," said Bob, "we have had wars and Inquisitions for Jesus' sake,

and the divine right of kings nourished upon scriptural passages, and Spain and the Stuarts living by him to their own ends. But Jesus has this aspect too: Peace and good will. And upon one of the loftiest ranges of the Andes stands a colossal figure of Christ in bronze. It was erected to memorialize the peace between the republics of Chile and Argentina, by which these republics bound themselves to reduce their armaments and to submit future questions of difference between them to arbitration. And on the monument are these words in substance: 'These mountains shall crumble into dust before Argentina and Chile break the peace, which at the feet of Christ, the Redeemer, they have sworn to preserve.'"

As Bob was speaking, suddenly before me came a vision of the Andes; a vision of that bronze figure of Christ, high up amid the snows, the clouds. And instantly Winifred materialized before me! It was her face — her smile, the ineffable tenderness of her eyes even as I saw them on Parnassus on that afternoon long ago. My heart slowed down, as if to cease. I arose and walked away. "Where you going?" Bob said. I waved my hand as if to say, "Just leave me alone, don't follow me." I heard George Higgins say, "Skeet doesn't act well." And I walked on, not directing my steps, not thinking where I was going; but I was walking straight to the tree where Becky and I had stood the day of our first meeting.

I felt that she was there. Yes, she was there, standing as if waiting for me. She was dressed all in white; she was encompassed by the greenery of the forest. She was a cloud upon the rim of the hill. And I walked toward her. I saw her standing there, a figure in white; for the rest I had eyes only for other things. Her face did not come into my vision. Indeed I did not wish to see it. But I did perceive her spirit; I gathered all of her beauty and power into my comprehension in a swift moment of bright intuition. All that she had said to me, done to me, was out of mind. Golden, ethereal flames devoured the waste

and the failure of our relationship. The sky soared above us. White clouds drifted through the empyrean. I came to the tree. But what I thought was Becky was merely mown grass whitened by the sun. I had relented, I had followed the light of the ever vanishing hope. But she had not heard the voice or seen the vision. Becky was not there !

I lost myself. I was standing against the tree, my head against my arm, my eyes closed or visionless. All was still. I turned around. And looked at the whitened grass that had deceived me. I reclined upon the moss and looked at the river. I was in a trance. And here I stayed until evening came and darkness. . . .



